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[VAULTING AMBITION.]

FAIR ANNE OF CLY. THE STORY OF A LIFE'S AMBITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Titans, like moths, are ever caught by glare,
And Mammon wins his way where seraphs might
despair. Byron.

It is said that every one has a golden apple within reach once in a life-time; if so it is also certain that many, dazzled by its brilliancy, hesitate so long ere they bite that the vegetable phenomenon is snatched up by those who seem born to grasp the chances fate dangles in the faces of the dillytory.

Farmer Darian thought of this when the earl startled him by his unexpected proposition. It was quite natural that Mr. Darian should waver.

"My lord," he replied, more puzzled than he cared to show, "you do not expect an answer at once?"

Of course the earl's brows were elevated to within an inch of his black hair, as if he wondered that the farmer should want a second thought.

"I cannot quite expect it," was his evasive and somewhat untruthful reply. "But I must know to-morrow."

"I could tell your lordship then."

"By twelve?"

"Yes, my lord."

They strolled back into the farm and Anne came, as they thought, accidentally upon them.

"Miss Darian," said his lordship, drawing her a little apart from her father, "it is perhaps only just that I should tell you that I have asked your father's consent for you to become my wife, to be the lady of the Hyde. Think of it, sweet Anne, and use your influence. Good morning."

He turned to Mr. Darian, shook hands, got into his carriage and drove away, leaving Anne bewildered and confused, speechless and still.

She had almost staggered back when the noble earl finished the startling sentence. If she had ever in her day-dreams built castles in the air, she had never built any castle as grand as the Hyde.

The earl's was singular love-making, she thought. But what of that? Would she expect to have a man so great in wealth and position as his lordship to woo as Sidney would, or as she had read young lovers were wont to do? By no stretch of imagination could she picture the earl on his knees with clasped hands and upturned eyes beseeching her to be his "idol," his "bride."

She stood for many minutes when Lord Dalryell had left her, stood with her head bowed and tiny hands toying with the strings of her hat, which she had removed from her head. The image of Sidney was upon her, his eyes looking into hers as though in reproach, there was that inexpressible look of devotion in his face that made it gentle even in anger, there was a momentary twitching of the old childhood's love in Anne's heart; but it was only momentary—Sidney Cardiff as he was born but bad comparison with the appearance of the Earl of Dalryell.

Her mind was still dazzled by the interior of the Hyde; she remembered the many galling jeers that had been hurled at her by the highly born young ladies at Madame Marville's establishment, the slurs they threw upon her home; she blushed for it herself now, she longed to be the lady that she was vain enough to think she ought to be; and turning to go into the house, she paused at the door as though to send the fervently uttered resolve to Heaven, and said:

"I will be the lady of this home. Marriage will bring its own love, and I can forget the past when I am mistress of so much wealth."

She went in then and found her father and mother in earnest converse about her.

Mr. Darian had related what had passed between him and Dalryell, and Mrs. Darian, unlike most mothers in her position, took a settled unfavourable view of the circumstances.

"We can do without such as he, father," she said.

"If we were in want of help what gain do you suppose it would be to us for our Anne to marry him? None. We do not wish it to be any gain, but we are better as we are. She would be Lady Dalryell—true; but we should not be parents-in-law to her husband;

not that we want that either, but we have brought Anne up too long to lose her altogether, and we should lose her altogether if she married so far above herself and us."

"Quite true, my dear, sensible and true."

"Our sphere and our money should be good enough for Anne," continued Mrs. Darian, acknowledging her husband's compliment only by a respectful pause. "There would be a sham grandeur in the alliance, but no good would ever come of it. Anne cannot have any love for him; he will never have any love for her. Besides, shall we forget ourselves so far as to blight the hopes and heart of Sidney, poor boy? I am sure he would not think it right of us, I am sure he does not deserve it."

"Right, mother," assented the farmer, with a glance of mingled pride and affection at his clear-sighted wife. "A marriage more suitable must be a more happy one."

"Then you will give the Earl of Dalryell a civil denial?"

"Certainly. Oh, Anne—"

She came in at that point of the discussion; she caught the sense too of the last few words they had uttered, and she looked alternately at the faces of her parents.

"What does mamma say to it?" she asked.

"Your mother," said Mr. Darian, laying great stress on the "mother," "says as I do, my pet ladybird, that such an idea can no way be entertained."

"Why not?"

"If you speak like that," answered the farmer, reprovingly, "I shall not answer you. It is sufficient that we think it wise."

"Yes," said Anne, with much womanly sarcasm in her voice and taunt in her manner, "it is wise to keep me shut up here in this dull, carpetless, shabby room, to let me forget all I have learned, to keep me from a piano and music, and then marry me to some one scarcely able to support me beyond the bare wants of existence. It is wise thus to throw away my education and my life."

"You will, no doubt, do as well as we have done, Anne," said her father, appealing for assistance from

his wife by a glance. "Should you never do worse than thank Heaven for it; should you ever do much better, be doubly grateful."

"Then why did you not keep me at home, as people like you would have done, and taught me to feed pigs, kill fowls, and use a bay-fork? Why did you tell me that if I did my teachers justice and behaved like a lady you would make my lot in life a good one?"

"So we shall. Sidney is a gentleman; his father was one and a man of letters. Sidney is very clever, and will shine in the world. Anne; he has money too, and many a better girl than you will be glad to pick him up."

"Then let them. He is going where there are plenty of all kinds, and no doubt he will soon forget me."

Mrs. Darian looked pained, but was silent for a little while. The father was greatly bewildered. He had not quite forgotten the words of Madame Marville, and the anxiety to do what he thought would be fatherly justice to Anne caused him some trouble.

"Have you then quite forgotten or lost your love for Sidney?" Mrs. Darian asked, at last.

"Sidney may never come back to us, mother; and do you think I can forget what happened the last night we met? Besides, was it his place to go away as he did, never leaving any message or a note, no, not even a good-bye. It is far easier to imagine Sidney working his way through the world than it will be for him to do it. I might wait for him for years and then find that he can only keep me upon the remains of his little money, and the uncertain incomings of some uncertain profession. If you oppose me, mother, and you, father, if you oppose me, if you withhold your consent to this union, do not, when the hair upon your heads is white before its time, say it was that mother's too; rather look back upon this night and say, 'The fault is ours.'"

That speech conveyed to the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Darian a vague threat, one that might be a girl's idea of doing something to make themselves for having opposed her wishes, or one that might mean too much for them to dare her into the execution of it.

"What can you know of that man that you should so rashly jump at the offer he has made?"

"I know, mother, that he is a nobleman, that he is rich and has splendid possessions, I know that he will make me a lady and mistress of the Hyde, and the esteem a man of that class has for a wife will be more lasting and perhaps give more happiness than a commoner man's love."

"If that is your idea, Anne, we should be doing wrong perhaps in forcing you to become the wife of a commoner man." Anne coloured deeply. "But when his lordship comes to-morrow I will not sit here. I will not verbally give my consent."

"Nor I," put in Mr. Darian. "Therefore we leave the rest to you, Anne. When he comes to-morrow answer him in person. You will have time to think over it and decide within yourself whether it is proper for a woman to have anything like honour in her composition."

"You leave it to me then?" asked the fair beauty, looking from one to the other.

"Ay," answered Darian, rising, "entirely, my girl, entirely."

"Thank you. Both you and mother will see I can choose for myself and think of your interests in life. Earl Dalyell is not the first titled man I have had offer me marriage, but I prefer him."

She left her parents and went to her room above. Had she stayed six seconds longer she would have seen her brother Will. He came in, looking grave and thoughtful. He was thinking of Sidney.

"Well, mother," he said, in his kind but gruff way, "why, you look quite unwell."

"I am troubled, Will."

"You are, mother? Troubles ought not to come to you. What has happened then?"

"A little difference between Anne and us," interposed Darian senior, "though I can't see that she is all to blame. The fact is, Lord Dalyell has been here and proposed for Anne. We want to oppose it, Anne dares us to do it."

"Dares! How?"

"It will be with the prospect of something worse in store for us if we stand in her way. She will marry him, so she says, in spite of us."

Will sat down and pondered.

"I did not think Anne would turn upon you like this," he said; "if she does not relent what can be done—"

Will broke off, interrupted in his speech by the entrance of a steady-whiskered man, who had for some time been groom and general male attendant to the farmer. He came to say that a messenger from Squire Lynn was without.

The messenger was shown in and he gave Will Darian a letter.

"What's up, I wonder?" he said, getting off his chair to go closer to the messenger, and then he went on:

"Dear Will,—I wish you would kindly come to me at once: I am in great trouble about Kate. But that I have injured my foot too severely for me to be able to put it to the ground, I would not have troubled you. Come at once and be prepared to stop out all night! Kate is missing!"

"I wonder what will happen next?" cried Mr. Darian.

Will stood thunderstruck, pale and irresolute.

"Kate missing?" he muttered. "Mother, you will know I am all right should I not be home at my usual time. Father, you can spare me?"

"Certainly, my dear Will. It's very seldom that you want to go away unless it's on my business. Don't forget I'm here should I be wanted, and tell the squire I will come and see him."

"All right, father. Good night, mother."

Tommy had brought him his out-door coat and hat, and Will, kissing his mother, turned to rush out, but was stayed at the door by Anne.

"Good night, Will."

"Ah, it's you, is it, youngster? Come, I say, you be a good girl till I come back, d'ye hear? There, I was a good mind not to kiss you."

He had spoken like one whose mind is bewildered, spoken hurriedly and disappointedly, and now that he was in Squire Lynn's gig rattling off towards Bramville House he was very grave.

The servant, looking up at his white face, thought that it looked very troubled. Desirous as Will was to know what had happened, he could not question the men, who after all might be the ignorant of what had taken place.

Once before the farmer's house was out of sight he looked back and saw his father at the door, standing with one hand upon Anne's shoulder and the other was shading his eyes as though the pale light of the few stars prevented him from seeing through the gloom.

It was easy enough for Will to discern them in the lighted doorway, but the farmer saw nothing save the glimpes, while he watched till they were out of sight.

Anne and her father went in, the door was closed, and they sat down in silence.

Much as his mind had been occupied by Anne's affair, the farmer could find room for thoughts of Kate, whose unexplained absence seemed a little like a mystery. Anne fancied, and with good reason, that she had gained an advantage in her brother being absent. He had a more forcible way of objecting than either her mother or father might use.

"I will go over to Mrs. Lynn to-morrow, mother," she said. "Will you come?"

"I will, my dear. But remember who is coming."

"I do, mother."

"And think carefully of the step you are about to take."

"Mother," said Anne, getting up, "I will go to bed now, that I may rest before I sleep. Good night—good night, father."

They kissed her in silence as she retired to her room, to reflect truly—but only upon the grandeur, the wealth, the position and the pleasures in store for her as Lady Dalyell, mistress of the Hyde.

"Mother, you must forgive me if in this I go against your wish and against the will of my father, but indeed I cannot forego an offer that will make life so sweet. To refuse this would be like flying against the will of Heaven."

So ran her murmured thoughts before she slept, so was worded the speech with which she met her mother the next morning.

Mrs. Darian's placid face did not show the effect of this resolve, her calm, beautiful eyes dwelt upon her daughter's face while she was speaking. When she had done the mother's eyes drooped as the mother's heart drooped.

She got up from the breakfast-table, lest she should sigh too loudly, and when she sat down again she was quite calm, the struggle was over.

The cherished hope, cherished for a lifetime nearly, that Sidney would be her son-in-law was discarded; she was prepared to bow submissively to the will of fate.

"Our non-absence," she said, referring to her husband and herself, "will speak plainly to Earl Dalyell how little we wish for this alliance. If you believe your happiness lies in this, go to him, my child, but I cannot be a party to breaking the heart of one that never deserved such unfair treatment as this."

Twelve o'clock came, the hour that was to cast the die of Anne Darian's life, the hour that was to take the country bells, the pet and beauty of Oly, from a life in which she had been born.

At five minutes to the hour Anne, dressed for this great occasion, stood by the window of the best room, designated by her the drawing-room.

She trembled now like a timid child, and when the step of her suitor sounded in the hall her heart gave a great thump, and she could scarcely stand.

One moment of this frightened, overcoming emotion and the worst had come.

Lord Dalyell stood before her and had taken in his now unglazed fingers her delicate, shaking hand.

"Miss Darian, I expected to see your father, but I am however more gratified that you should receive me. Have you spoken to him? Can you tell me the answer I am to have? Think, my sweet child, of all that I suffer from suspense."

A modest silence on Anne's part, a respectful wait on his, during which he contemplated her superb figure and spiritual beauty of face. He evidently looked upon the bargain as a very good one and he smiled.

"My lord, but that I feel sensibly gratified to you for the kindness and gentleness you have always used towards me, I should appreciate less the position you offer. Following the dictates of my heart and not being directly opposed by my parents, I am here to answer you in person. My lord, is that sufficient?"

"Quite, sweet Anne. Quite, my little wife. The answer is all the sweeter coming from your lips. As the future lady of the Hyde, I salute you—Ah, Mr. Darian, I am glad you are come."

CHAPTER IX.

When once the young heart of a maiden is stolen the maiden herself will cool after it soon. Moore.

BRAMVILLE HOUSE was not in its usual tranquil state when Will Darian reached it.

He found Mrs. Lynn in tears and the squire seated back in a large arm-chair with the right foot swathed in bandages and kept upon a mat made for some purpose more vague than useful.

The squire was in a good deal of bodily pain on account of dislocation of his ankle, but he was in a good deal more mental pain on account of the singular disappearance of his daughter.

"Ah, Will," he said, stretching out his hand, "I am glad you have come so soon. Sit down. Mother, pray leave off weeping, it's a grievance."

"Philip, Philip, how can I? How can you be so cruel?"

"Cruel be hanged!" said the squire, fairly in a temper, a condition that was new to his not being able to get about. "Women always weep."

"I am a mother. Heaven knows if I cannot shed a tear under such circumstances who is to?"

"Shed a tear! You're always shedding tears. And now let me speak to Will."

Philip Lynn was cracking the forefinger of his right hand upon the knuckles of his left, or else he was biting his thumb, both signs that were ominous, and Mrs. Lynn, with a handkerchief to her eyes and a smothered sob, meekly left the room, much as Will could see, to the squire's relief.

"Women," he said, as a sort of extenuation of his harshness, "always get up a scene, as though it can do any good. They are the most unphilosophical creatures in the world. As though things are not bad enough without then sitting opposite one weeping."

Will, who had not had the experience of twenty-five years' double-blessedness, thought that Mr. Lynn was brutal and Mrs. Lynn very much injured.

"You think I'm a brute, no doubt," he again burst out, as though his temper had not yet found a vent-peg.

"Well, Mr. Lynn, I should not—"

"Yes, you would, sir. It's very fine for you. You go about with the notion that women are angels, and believe any man to be a lucky fellow that gets a tolerably good-looking one for his wife. It's all nonsense, sir, the obligation is on the other side and they don't remain angels much longer than the first month after marriage; and I hope you know things go by the extremes, therefore avoid angels."

Will smiled with an attempt to appear very sage over the matter, but he only failed miserably and faring to be much in the way of—as he thought to himself—the now discovered vent-peg, he asked if anything really more serious than Mr. Lynn's sad accident had happened.

"Of course there is, and Heaven alone knows what really may have happened. Kate has disappeared and nobody knows where. She bid us good night last night, went to bed—so we believe, and this morning we found she was gone. It is not the first time she has gone out before we were up, and I thought nothing of it until I discovered, by sending my servants about, that she had not been seen amongst any of her friends."

"Can you suggest any explanation?" asked Will, who was too perplexed and breathless to think of any himself.

"I cannot suggest any clue, Will, to this mystery."

And the squire looked very hard at young Darian, for he saw that his face was very white and that his lips trembled spasmodically.

"Mr. Lynn," Will said, huskily, "you don't think the very worst has—"

"Kate is alive, I feel almost convinced," answered the squire, dreading to hear the faintest thoughts that she was not.

"Thank Heaven!" said Will, loud enough and fervently enough for Mr. Lynn to hear and wonder at.

"Do you remember the Honourable George Clanourdy that was at the fête?"

"At Lord Colin Whitbert's fête?"

The squire signified that such was the occasion he referred to.

"Just a little, Mr. Lynn."

"You do remember him then?"

Will intimated that he had seen the gentleman since.

"Very well. Then, this same honourable gentleman has visited here since his cousin, Lord Colin, left Whitbert. Do you know that he made very great advances to my daughter Kate?"

"On the night of the festival, Mr. Lynn?"

"Yes."

By the flush upon the young farmer's cheeks it was easy to understand that he had not been aware of that fact.

"We all left early," he explained. "Too many of the wrong sort were saying a good deal too much to Anne, I noticed, and she has got her head turned quite enough. It's had for girls to try and fly higher than they should attempt."

"There is no harm in a lady marrying a step higher than herself, Will, more especially as it is usually expected they will do so. How often do you hear of unequal marriages? Lady Jane Somebody, without any money, marrying Lord G. Somebody would be placing herself under an obligation. The marriage is unequal. Of course society won't admit that, because there are too many of the Lady Jane Somebody-elses."

Will did not doubt it. His knowledge of society was very limited; he had to believe in the opinions of others.

"What I should look for in a man for my Kate would be honesty of thought and action, a steady arm, sound head and good heart, no matter whether the owner of the said qualities should come from behind a plough or be heir to a dukedom."

Will felt inclined to immediately elatch the squire by the hand, but he restrained this impulse from many suddenly conceived reasons, and Mr. Lynn returned to the subject that brought them both together.

"This Honourable Clanourdy, I found out, was a very good sort of man in his way; but his way not being the one I should like Kate to come into, I told him so very plainly. But I am afraid he has been till-principled enough to carry on a clandestine correspondence with Kate. In which case he may have won a certain power over her mind, and, for all we know, have induced her to leave my house, perhaps only under the pretence of going out for the day, and then taken her beyond our reach. I hope it is not so, Will, for her safety's sake, but it is not without long and careful thought I have come to this conclusion—a most painful one for me."

Could he have seen noble Will's great heart then he would have seen the blow struck home there—struck swift and heavily.

"Have you ascertained anything about Clanourdy?" he asked.

"I discovered to-day that two evenings since he left Lord Colin's estate."

"It's hard to think that Miss Lynn would be led away," said Will.

"Very. But this remains to be seen. I am unable to get out. To trust in any of my servants would be useless—they are all idiots; and so I made up my mind, my dear Will, to appeal to you, and will not pay you a lot of compliments, but say what I think, which is, that there is no one I could entrust this matter to better, or so well, as I can to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Lynn."

"The only thing is, shall I not more than intrude upon your time, you may lose a whole day—"

"Father is at the farm."

"If you could only discover a clue to this mystery, Will, I could not differently."

"Mr. Lynn, you may depend that I shall not care to give up until I have found your daughter. You know that I work on the farm as I do from choice, and that the loss of a few days will make no difference to me. Your calmness over this affair gives me hope, and I trust it will soon be cleared up."

"My calmness, Will?" answered the squire, looking round the room to ascertain whether Mrs. Lynn had returned. "Calmness is duty in a man, my young friend, I am the head of the household, and what would be said and done if I dared give way? My grief is here, Will, deeply embedded here!"

He struck his chest, and there was moisture in his eyes.

Young Darian, with a choking sensation in his throat, got up and took the squire's hand.

"What would Dan say to this?" he asked.

"My son is not likely to know it. He has left the North of England for Germany."

"They say everything happens for the best," said Will, thoughtfully.

"I am afraid we don't always see it in that light; and now, Will, tell me what steps do you think it advisable to take."

Darian pondered. Then he went on to suggest simply that he should go to the railway station and houses whence the omnibuses started and make inquiries.

Squire Lynn agreed with him.

"Take the gig, Will, and take Nixon with you."

Tom Nixon was Lynn's favourite man-servant and head groom.

"I do not suppose you are sufficiently prepared for emergencies, Will; so take this, as I would not have you delay to go home again. Should circumstances require you to leave by rail you can send the gig back by Nixon, or keep him and let one of the porters drive back. Nixon is useful; he understands travelling and knows London. Heaven speed you, Will; I shall bear up while you are gone, but my heart will be with you."

Very heartily did the squire shake hands with the young farmer then, and Will started off on his seemingly wild-goose chase.

"Nixon," said Will, seriously.

"Yes, Mr. William."

"You know what has happened?"

"Yes, Mr. William; know'd from the first," and Nixon tilted his hat a little more to the left, as though he was beginning conjuring under difficulties.

"Do you think we had better go to the railway first?"

"I think so, Mr. William."

And so they drove to the station. It was a long distance, some six miles or so; but the mare went well, and Will knew the nearest way.

Nixon, who had a speculative mind, amused himself by wondering why Mr. William should so much concern himself about Miss Lynn to such an extent, and he surmised all the most singular things that he could, disturbed his mind by making melodramatic plots out of his conjectures; and when at last he felt that he had hit upon the "right thing," he smiled himself tranquil, jerked his hat over to the right eyebrow, and sat bolt upright as an automaton.

At the station Will found his troubles commencing. The porters, as has often been told, knew nothing, not even the correct time for a train to leave for London, the station-master was engaged for twenty minutes, and the inspector had not "been on" during the day.

Will felt very much inclined to say something of an unpleasant kind.

Nixon stuck his thumbs in his belt, shifted his hat to the left eyebrow, and whistled in a whisper.

The station-master came at last. He glanced at Nixon's quiet but first-class liverly suit, and thought Will a person of some importance.

Will, with much eagerness, opened a siege of inquiry, and the station-master questioned all his people, who, by the way, seemed then to know and remember pretty well every one.

Will began to entertain strong hopes of finding a clue to the mystery.

A lady, in company with a gentleman, whom they thought would answer to the description given, left by the first train that morning, but whether she took train simply for Clifton-by-the-Sea, or went on to London, they could not say.

"If you will wait an hour, sir, or call back again, the train that left with the lady and gentleman we speak of will be in. The guard can tell you every particular."

"Better wait," whispered Nixon.

"I'll come back again," said Will, to the station-master and to Nixon. "We will drive to the 'Golden Dove'; Clanourdy must have put up somewhere the last two days."

"Capital idea, Mr. William," said Nixon, with a view to some whiskey and water.

The "Golden Dove" was not very far from the station, and the "Golden Dove" was not very far from being one of the oldest and quaintest inns to be found in these days. Its rooms were large, its beds good, and the host dealt in the best of fare.

Nixon remained with the gig outside while Will went in; and Nixon then gave the horse some water, holding the pail on his knee; and while the animal was drinking Nixon became conscious of the presence of a gentleman not so steady on his legs as might have been consistent with the hour, and this same gentleman was very minutely inspecting him.

"Halloa, there!" demanded Nixon, in a threatening tone.

"Hallo, there!" came from the unsteady gentleman, in a thick, jingling voice.

"Who are you? What d'ye want here? None o' your capering, my boy. I've got my eye on the whip," answered Nixon.

"It's likely you'll get the whip in your eye in stead," said the gentleman, standing ten yards off and surveying Nixon with a large amount of would-be contempt.

Whether it was the man's attitude, or whether it was the rather challenging threat that suddenly set a light to the fire of Nixon's tongue can only be surmised; but he dropped the horse-pail as though it had suddenly got very hot, and, by a wonderful manoeuvre keeping his hat on its balance, strode close enough up to the unsteady gentleman to put his shoulder under his chin and inquire if he would "Say that again," and magnanimously intimating that he would be merciful, as "you're too drunk to know you're own mother!"

The unsteady gentleman replied with a wink, that Nixon wasn't his mother—was he? Nixon said he wouldn't consider himself a Christian if he was, and a thoroughly loud altercation began. Nixon became worse in temper and stronger in his determination to knock his enemy down, but Will appeared at the opportune moment, and, putting his arm between the two, demanded what they meant.

"He was a snooking about the gig," said Nixon, smartly touching his hat.

"What o' that? It's Squire Lynn, ain't it, and didn't I know it?"

"Why didn't ye say so before?"

"Cos you wouldn't let me, and I knows why you and that gentleman is here. I'm not sich a fool as I look, my boy, as the Hon. G. Clanourdy would tell you if he was here. He sacked me more than a week ago. I was his servant and I ain't got another crib yet. I been staying in the country to watch his little game, 'cos he acted like a scamp and a traitor to me."

"Look you," said Will, "if you are telling the truth this will be a good thing for you."

"Why, sir?"

"When did you see your master last? I am in search of him."

"This morning, sir. Come inside and I'll tell you. I'll tell the truth, I will, as sure as I've life; and I'll tell you, by way of a proof, that he went with a strange lady and his sister. I knew then that something was up—that somebody would suffer."

CHAPTER X.

Look always on the sunny side,
'Tis wiser and better far.

THE Earl of Dalryell in no way regretted the step he had taken. He looked upon the acceptance of his offer as a certainty from the time he first thought of pressing his suit. But no lovers' ecstasies were shown by him, no fervent speeches made. His eyes lighted up with the bursting forth of a slumbering fire when he kissed his fiancée, and he smiled in his forcedly pleasant way.

He gave Mr. Darian to understand—as he did Anne—that his future bride was to be looked upon now as the Countess of Dalryell, that she was to hold herself ready to obey his wishes at any moment, and would consider herself from this day under his dictation. He would give her every comfort and every consideration that a person of such dignity should have, and should never forget the duties imposed by the sacred ties of matrimony so long as she remembered them.

To fulfil all the important duties of a lady of rank, Anne must be under the guidance of some one more capable of teaching her than Mrs. Darian was. The farmer reasoned that way himself, but it was a very painful way and very painful reasoning.

Madame Marville would be brought to the Hyde at once to receive Anne while his lordship went to London to settle some affairs. He would return in time to meet Anne at the church the day he should specify, but the marriage would be a private one.

Dalryell would have taken Mr. Darian back to the Hyde, but the farmer, in his rough, proud way, pleaded the pressure of certain engagements, and his lordship returned alone.

"I shall never feel able to look poor Sid in the face again, mother," the farmer said, being once more alone with his placid wife. "Never."

"We must not forget, Peter, that it was against your wish and mine, and that, though we should think of our nephew's happiness, we have the happiness of our daughter at heart. Sidney was very young, too young to be able to give any definite period for a union, and Anne was not strictly affianced to him, it was more by a mutual unexpressed understanding than anything else. As children their little love days were encouraged by us, and words have dropped

from our lips in playful promise of a united future for them. Sidney was never bound to Anne by any lasting tie any more than she was to him. I am sorry for him, and for her too should she not be happy. But she now will marry the man of her choice, and if we had hindered her, Peter, you may rely upon it she would have shunned Sidney as the indirect cause of our opposition."

Mrs. Darian kept steadily on with her needlework as she spoke, and she spoke with the calm judgment that was almost something more than woman's.

The farmer's admiration for his wife increased even now, his esteem for her could never die while life remained.

"That's very sensible and very true, Anne, my dear, very, and brought a great relief to my mind, only I am thinking whether this match will be a happy and a prosperous one."

"We cannot doubt its prosperity, Peter." Mrs. Darian always spoke the word "Peter" with so much tenderness as to make it sound sweeter than any endearing word. "His lordship is too wealthy for that, and I think he is a man of good heart and sound principles."

"I hope he is, my dear. Anne, I think, has some affection for him in spite of his being so much older."

"He does not look old, Peter."

"Not at all."

"And there is that gentleness in his tone and manner that would go easily to such a susceptible heart as Anne's. I do not know, after all, but that we ought to feel very grateful to Heaven for sending such a blessing. We shall not derive much benefit from the alliance, Peter, but we shall feel the glorious pleasure of seeing our daughter amongst the fairest of the land, and knowing that our daughter's children will be born nobles."

"Well, well, perhaps we have made more bones about the matter than was necessary. We must expect to lose Anne, that is one painful thing, mother."

"During the months of the year Anne is at the Hyde she will find time to call upon us. To intrude ourselves there too often would be bad taste. If Anne is fit for the Earl of Dalryell and his people, we are not; it would be unfair to think it and expect it."

"Yet you had set your heart upon Sidney being allied to Anne, mother?"

"I did, Peter. It has been a great mental blow to me to find that such a thing is quite impossible, but I must find moral courage to fight against that. No mortal has a right to suppose he or she can rule circumstances or fate at will. There is just as much chance of Sidney finding some one that will fill the place of our Anne as there was of Anne meeting with such an offer."

"Should that be the case, mother, things will be happy enough."

"Sidney must be persuaded, Peter, that what has happened has happened for the best."

"Ah, that is hard," sighed the farmer. "Young, impetuous lads rarely listen to such counsel."

"In time they will."

"Time—yes, time does all things," said Darian, brightening up a little.

"I think, Peter, it is not wise for us to allow this to cause any sort of feeling of dissension to grow up at the beginning. What is to be, I suppose, will be. Anne had far better receive our congratulations, even if they are less heartfelt than they should be, than be met with silent reserve."

"Where is she now, mother?"

"Gone to her room. I will go to her for a while."

Mrs. Darian went upstairs, and the farmer went out on the farm.

Mr. Darian met one of Squire Lynn's servants approaching the house. He had a letter for the farmer, and the letter contained news of Will, who had, of course, not returned since the time he left to go in search of Kate Lynn.

"My dear Darian, kindly favour me by driving over this afternoon or evening," the squire wrote. "I will tell you then what has happened. Will is safe and found a clue to the mystery. He says he will write to you. As I know Mrs. Darian dislikes leaving the house when you and your son are away I will send Mrs. Lynn over to keep her company."

There was a postscript begging the farmer to attend for a quiet tea, and Mr. Darian accepted the invitation.

The man returned with the message, and Darian went back into the house. His wife was upstairs with Anne.

Anno was seated upon the edge of the bed, dreamingly regarding a little heap of her best attire, wondering how it would look by the side of that which she was to wear when she became the bride of a noble.

She was half-unconscious of her mother's presence, so bewildered was the state of her mind. The whole of

the important incidents that had passed since she left school seemed like the changes of a dream, and she almost doubted whether the longed-for event would ever be realized.

Mrs. Darian spoke to her kindly, smiled at what fate had thrown in their way, spoke lightly and pleasantly of the happiness in store for Anne.

The beautiful girl looked up a little surprised, the only unhappy thought that came upon her was that she was going against the wish and will of her parents.

"Then you think well of it now, mother? You are glad? You will not taunt me with having gone against your wishes?"

"No, darling, no. Your future is not a consideration for ourselves, but for you. Your way of life may be far different to what mine has been. May it be as happy."

Anno wept then, not from sorrow but because her feelings were those of that indescribable nature that require relieving somehow. Her lovely head was rested on her mother's shoulders, and her mother let her weep unrestrained till a calm came.

She spoke then.

"Anne, my darling, you must brighten up now. You should be all smiles, not tears. Will you go out? Go to Mr. Lynn's."

"Yes, dear mother, I will."

"But do not say anything of your good fortune, unless the subject is opened by any one else, as it would be bad taste, since an affliction has fallen upon the family."

Anno assented and Mrs. Darian got up and went to the door.

The farmer was outside; he had come to tell his wife of the squire's letter.

Mrs. Darian was glad Mrs. Lynn was coming to see her; she was glad her husband would go for an hour's change; she was glad too that Anne would go with him.

Mrs. Darian was never more happy than when she could find and add to the pleasures of others.

So Anne dressed herself for the visit, and the farmer dressed himself for the visit, and they drove over to Bramville House, as Mrs. Lynn was driven over to Rook Farm.

Mr. Darian met the squire cheerfully; Mrs. Lynn met Mrs. Darian with tear-streaming eyes and sorrow in her heart at what had happened at home.

The farmer soon learned from the squire how they had missed Kate, and he soon had his mind at rest concerning Will.

The squire was very gentle towards Anne, and the farmer, by a slip of the tongue, let out about the Earl of Dalryell's proposal, and then the squire's brow was clouded.

But for men of title and position his daughter would still be at home, he believed. He did not speak from jealousy, yet gave it as his opinion that no good ever did come of a girl marrying so far above her as to necessitate being alienated from her parents.

The farmer did not stay late, as the squire's leg was too bad for him to be out of bed too long.

When Mr. Darian went back to the farm he found one of the handsome-liveried servants of the Earl of Dalryell awaiting his return.

The man bowed very obsequiously to Anne, and handed her a silver casket.

"I was to deliver it into your hands, madam, if you please; there is no answer."

The man backed out, and Anne laid the casket upon the table. Her parents were looking on, and Anne, with trembling hands, opened the case—opened it with a singular feeling of alarm; and when the lid flew open, forced back by a spring, Anne placed her hands across her eyes and went back a step; neither she nor Mrs. Darian could repress a cry—a cry that was one of mingled gladness and surprise, of bewilderment and wondering ecstasy.

(To be continued.)

CHINESE BRANDY.—We understand from a correspondent in China that our spirit market will be shortly favoured with a large consignment of Chinese brandy called wine paste (tsien-sia). This compound seems to be a mixture of herbs incorporated with clay. The paste, when in contact with potato flour, transforms it by fermentation into sugar, which through an apparatus of great simplicity and trifling cost, yields about twenty gallons of spirits per day.—*The Daily Recorder*.

THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.—This title, which has been conferred on His Royal Highness Prince Arthur, is not quite new in the Royal Family. According to the Peerages of Lodge and Burke Prince William Henry, a younger brother of George III., was created in 1764 Duke of Gloucester and also "Earl of Connaught;" and these titles passed to his son, the second Duke of that creation, but became extinct at his death in the year 1834. It is also not

true that the present is even the second instance of one of the Royal Family being directly connected with the sister kingdom by an Irish title; for example, the Prince of Wales is Earl of Dublin, as was his grandfather, the Duke of Kent; the late and present Dukes of Cumberland have always enjoyed the title of Earls of Armagh; the late Duke of Cambridge was created Earl of Tipperary, and his son, the present Duke, still holds that earldom; the Duke of Edinburgh is Earl of Ulster; the late Duke of Sussex was also Baron Arklow, in the county of Wicklow; and the Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William IV., was created Earl of Munster in 1719.

WILLIE'S TRUST.

A BREATH of the springtide is blowing
Its scents round the dingy old house;
The young trees in the orchard are showing
The first hints of green on the boughs.

On the mouldering porch of the cottage
The grandsire leans on his staff,
While a little lad, bright as a fairy,
Takes his hand, and looks up with a laugh.

"Don't you feel jolly, grandfather,
That the spring-time is coming?" he says.

"All that's brown will be green in a fortnight,
And the birds will be singing their lays."

"Ay, ay!" quoth the grandsire, chuckling;
"The old earth will awaken once more;
And the blossoms will form on the orchard,
Like fountains of foam on the shore."

"And the bright merry swallows, grandfather,
Will build in the chimney again,
And the roses grow thick on the trellis—
Oh, won't it be beautiful then?"

"Ay, swallows, and roses, and—Willie!"
Here the voice shook a little, you know,
And o'er the old face fell a shadow,
As a sudden dark thought might bestow.

"And, Willie, boy, what of the sister
Who was with you last spring at my side?
The star-headed baby we loved so—
Where will she pass the merry spring-tide?"

Thé laughing eyes brimmed, as with dew-drops,
The merry lip shook for a space,
The tiny hand clenched—then the sunshine

Flowed back o'er the flower-like face.
"Fie, grandfather! now you are cruel
To fancy and speak of her thus;
When you know little Maud is in heaven,
Do you think she'd be envying us?"

"Soon the grass and the moss and the wild flowers
Will deck her small grave in the dell,
And we'll wander down there and caress them,
And hear the soft tales they may tell."

"For I know they will whisper to Maudie,
And tell us what sort of springtide
She is having up there, where she's waiting
Till her Willie can come to her side."

From the grandsire's face fleets the shadow,
A smile in the wrinkles unfolds;
He speaks not, but presses more closely
The soft little hand that he holds.

N. D. U.

AN artist found a model in a beggar with a splendid long beard—dirty and unkempt—just such as he wanted for some venerable, saintly person he was going to put on canvas in the old master style. He gave the man twopenny, and told him he could earn a shilling a day if he would call at the studio (address so-and-so). The man called the next morning, and had cut off his beard to make himself tidy and fit for the artist's society. The artist gave him a penny, and told him to go away, or he would send the police after him.

AN ATTEMPT to DIG UP THE MALVERN HILLS.—A curious case of eccentricity is reported by the Herefordshire papers in recording the death of Mr. Johnson, of Colwall, who has, it is stated, spent the whole of his fortune, estimated at 100,000*l.*, in attempting to dig up the Malvern Hills. He persevered, it is said, year after year, towards the accomplishment of his project, and made a considerable hole in the Herefordshire Beacon. The work involved him in a lawsuit with the Highway Commissioners, but he still proceeded, and the result of his labours is to be seen in the vicinity of his house.



THE DOUBLE BONDAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Lost Coronet," "Elgiva," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLV.

No—that hallowed form is ne'er forgot
Which first love traced.
Still it lingers haunts the greenest spot
On memory's waste,
'Twas odour fled,
As soon as shed,
'Twas morning's loving dream,
'Twas a light that ne'er can rise again
On life's dull stream;
Oh, 'twas light that ne'er can rise again.

GWENDA LORAINE had listened with a strange half-stunned consciousness to the warnings given her by that terrible stranger.

She sat there in all the calm dignity that was perhaps the offspring of despair and that sat so strangely on the young girlish features and slight form.

But when Count Albert ceased to speak she roused herself from the abstraction that had hitherto clouded her very brain.

"I know," she said, "I know. My father has been here, and told me; but what of you? why should you dare to come and aggravate my sorrows? It is base, unmanly! I will not submit to it," she added, bitterly. "Leave me; I would be alone," she added, waving him from her with the air of a queen.

Count Albert surveyed her rather with an inquiring amusement than with any apparent indignation.

"You are exceedingly charming, fair Gwenda, there's no doubt of it," he returned, "and I do not like you the worse for this little outburst of spirit. Still, it has this one disadvantage, that it only serves to increase your natural attractions and make me more resolved on accomplishing my purpose."

"Pray what may your purpose be?" asked the girl, with a bitter scorn that well-nigh scorched the veteran man of the world, spite of his case-hardened temperament.

"To make you my wife, fairest Gwenda," was the gallant reply. "And there can be but one alternative if you resist—simply ruin."

The ward chilled her to the very heart's core. But her high spirit carried her through even that sudden shock.

Indeed the young heart was more accessible through its affections than through fear, and she merely gave a bitter, cynical laugh as she returned a brief reply:

"Never, while I have life and reason."

[DESPAIR UNUTTERABLE.]

His brow darkened, but yet his tone had a slight indifference in it that spoke rather of levity, or cool certainty as to the victory he would win.

"Stay a little ere you decide, fair lady," he replied. "Perhaps you cannot realize the real situation in which you are placed. It is no wonder if you suppose that Miss Loraine, the lovely heiress of three thousand a year, can afford to ignore the fact that her father was a felon. But it may be a different matter if the wealth were proved to be but phantom-like, and that your father might be seized, punished, by an extra sentence, or a flogging, and the whole of his property be confiscated to the Crown."

Gwenda uttered a sharp cry.

"Man, you are a fiend, a heartless fiend!" she exclaimed. "You could not be guilty of such cruelty."

"Pardon me. I have persisted in far more unlikely lines of conduct," he returned. "I advise you not to trust to my change of feeling, but to your own good sense and wisdom in your decision. I know the whole affair through every ramification—ay, before you were born, its coming fate was clear to me as my own. Some of the incidents," he continued, "were not perhaps foreseen, but the general outlines were as in a book, and my plans have been as long laid in my own breast."

"Then there they must remain," exclaimed the girl, impatiently. "I will not be perjured, and I will not even do those I love the injustice to believe they could be guilty of bringing such misery on my head."

Count Albert smiled sarcastically.

"Then if it will avail aught, I would swear it to you," he exclaimed. "I have at this moment your father's destiny in my keeping. I can prove that he has been a convict, who has broken his ticket-of-leave and made himself liable to serious punishment. And, what is more, the whole of his fortune will be confiscated, and you will be the friendless, disgraced, despised daughter of a convicted and doubly-punished felon. Such will be the consequences if you refuse to be my wife, my countess, my queen," he went on, gallantly.

She sat silent and motionless for a time.

"No," she shrieked at length, as if the cry was wrung hopelessly and involuntarily from her heart, "I cannot! I cannot! It were unnatural security."

"By no means," returned the count. "It would be but the payment of a debt. Hearken, my fair Gwenda. In old days, long before your pretty eyes saw the light, I loved a woman whom your father's—what shall we say—management, if you will, drew from me to himself. It made my life miserable and lonely for a time. It were little for you to recompense

the debt by giving me Raymond Lester's child as my bride in later years," he went on, with his blandest tone and smile.

"Do you mean my mother?" she asked, suddenly. "No," he said, "It was not your mother. It was one who should have taken your mother's place."

Gwenda shuddered.

There was, she scarcely knew why, a terrible significance in those last words. She dared not ask. She dared not realize the fears that chilled her very blood. She scarcely knew the real story of that miserable murder.

All that she comprehended was that a foul deed had been committed and that Maud's lover was involved in the affair. But her mind had been too much engaged for her to give much heed to that which in truth little concerned her—the name or the motives connected with the miserable sin.

She could scarcely have accounted for the impulse that prompted her to exclaim on the very moment: "And where is she now?" and then, ere the reply was given, to shrink back from the danger that might attend it.

"No, no! it matters not. It cannot influence my resolve," she said, hastily. "In any case it will be the same. I have decided. I will not be drawn into so deep a sin and deceit."

"Your filial piety is not of a very exalted kind then," returned the count, quietly, "since you are willing to bring your father into such fearful danger and suffering. He gave you life, Gwenda Lester. It appears to me that you little value your obligations in return."

The girl shrugged her shoulders impetuously.

"I dare not sin. I would suffer, I would work, nay, beg for him," she said, piteously. "Do not urge me; it is of no avail. I will not change."

"You think I shall; or else perhaps you do not believe my words?" he said.

"No, no! I do not doubt either your power or your will," she said, sadly.

"What will you do when this home is seized upon; when you will be turned out as a helpless beggar on the world?" he said, tauntingly.

"I do not know; perhaps Heaven will take me, perhaps I can die," she wailed. "I have nothing to live for now. I will but work—work for my living and for his—if he will let me."

"Oh! you need not trouble yourself. The country will charge itself with the expense of your interesting father's maintenance," he returned, coldly. "But, at the same time, there may be some objections in the minds of many persons to employ or even shelter the

daughter of so celebrated a character as Raymond Lester. You had better prepare for that."

"I know," she said, "I know."
 "And then," he continued, "it will be for the Marquis of Brunton to prove his love by an alms to his pauper love. Or perhaps Lady Maud may have more means at her disposal for relieving her friend, unless she has to help the worthy pendant to her brother's love—the criminal to whom she was betrothed."

"Truly," he went on, with a cold sneer, "truly, the old marquis might well say that he was taken from the evil to come. It would have been pleasant for him to see his son's and daughter's engagements so abruptly ended by the strong arm of the law. However, in your case, and perhaps Lady Maud's, a title and coronet may still be at your feet."

"Lady Maud may well expect such a position," said Gwenda, composedly. "For myself I neither wish for, nor am likely to have it. Please to leave me. I have said all. I am not likely to change, and I may at least be alone, as the only boon I ask. It is my own house at present," she continued, haughtily, "and I request you to leave it at once."

Certainly if she was not endowed with a coronet, she looked worthy of one in the commanding dignity of her manner and the unflinching expression of the eyes as she turned them on the count's cold, sneering countenance.

And the next moment she moved to the bell and laid her fingers on the handle to summons a servant for the dismissal of the stranger.

But she stopped her by a hasty gesture.

"Stop, Miss Lester, I do not intend to be turned from the house like an interloper. If you are resolved on your mad course, I will go, but rather than allow you to bring misery upon your own head without due consideration, I will give you twenty-four hours for consideration on my part on the refusal you have hastily given. At this hour to-morrow I will be here to learn your final decision. Till then, adieu."

And with an elaborate bow and smile, that might have graced a courtier, he walked quickly from the room.

Gwenda listened to the retreating steps with a stony calmness. Then as they entirely died away she cast herself on the couch with a silent despair in her heart that was more dreadful than the most violent plaints.

"Wicked that I am. Oh, Heaven, help me not to hate him I ought to love and honour," she exclaimed, as she lay with her face buried in the cushions and her whole form extended in a perfect abandonment of grief.

There was a deep silence in the chamber.

Gwenda's mind was too engrossed with her own deep agony for her even to be conscious of any passing objects.

There were the usual sounds without the house. The birds, the animals, the vague hum of insects, the labouring gardeners at their pleasant toil, were all pursuing their usual course, regardless of that sad woman within.

But Gwenda heeded them not. She felt as if in a dream, as if walking in an unreal show. Nothing was hers now, and she had but a stranger's position in that fair heritage, which a few hours before she had believed to be all her own.

It was no wonder if a cautious step was unperceived by her, if a figure that stole from the shelter of the verandah into which the windows of the room opened, and after a few moment's survey of the interior, ventured to advance farther into the apartment.

He stood a few paces distant from the suffering girl, gazing on her with eyes that spoke a whole world of sympathy and love. Then, with a gentle preparation for his presence in a slight cough and clearing of his throat, he moved nearer to her side.

"Gwenda, dear Gwenda, be comforted," he whispered, touching the hand that lay helplessly at her side.

The girl sprang up with a sharp cry.

"Mr. Dorrington, this is an uncalculated insult. I am fallen very low, if I cannot command an hour's solitude in my own house—but, no, no," she wailed, "I am wrong. Nothing is mine—nothing save shame and disgrace."

And she clasped her hand tightly over her face as if to restrain the tears that were bursting from her very eyes.

"Gwenda, it is for that I am come," said the young man, sadly. "I know that it is a terrible trial and that you are alone—alone with grief. But, oh, dearest, if you could but see, what you will some day feel, the destiny from which you are saved, you would not think it all bitterness. Bernard never would have been worthy of you, never have made you happy. But you cannot feel it yet. Only I implore you to remember that in me you find a friend who will never fail, whose whole soul is devoted to your happiness," he went on, in low, earnest tones.

She gave an impatient gesture of assent.

"No, no. I want nothing, no one. Do not let me believe you have brought this fearful thing in order to part us," she replied, quickly.

"I can pardon this—anything at such a moment," he said, in a sad, pained voice. "But, as Heaven is my witness, I would willingly have borne not only all I suffered but given years of my life to save you from this trial. And had it not been for the strange coincidence of that man, that enemy of your father, again appearing on the scene, and with a full knowledge by some mysterious means of all that concerns him, I would have implored your poor father to sacrifice all rather than risk your peace by a revelation of the truth! Will you not believe me, Gwenda?" he said, sadly, as she still remained silent and pensive on her couch.

"Yes, yes, only say nothing of love, nothing of any pity or of him," she murmured, impatiently.

"Very well. So be it. I will not torment you with vain words, because your own heart must tell you I am only speaking truth," he said, calmly. "But I will—I must speak of one other who is as suffering—ay, and more so than yourself, for he has self-reproach to bear and the consciousness of having destroyed the peace of one he strove to surround with every blessing."

Gwenda shuddered.

"You mean my father?" she said, in a tone that seemed well nigh choked in uttering the word.

"Yes," he said, firmly. "I do. And, what is more, I must dare all to say what I believe is due to you, dear Gwenda. You are his child. He has toiled and suffered and planned and hoped, as few parents ever did, for you. He has risked his life and safety to feast his eyes with one glimpse of the daughter who was his all on earth. And you sent him from you in misery and despair, crushed to the heart-core at your scorn and anger. Gwenda, it was natural, I know, the trial was so sharp, the agony so stinging that you could scarcely comprehend what you did or felt. But now I would ask you to be your own noble self, to forget your sorrow in his, your father's."

She turned impatiently away.

"I cannot, I cannot—it is too much. Better have let me die than this agony," she exclaimed.

"No, no, you are hasty, wrong, unjust," he said, firmly. "Gwenda, you are gifted as few girls are with beauty and grace and talent, and you have been admired in the sunny atmosphere of prosperity for your charms. But I know, I feel that you have a higher and nobler nature than you believe—I could not have loved you else; but it lumbered for want of stimulants to call it forth, and now it will assert itself in due time," he pleaded, earnestly. "You will conquer your grief—you will rise above selfish sorrow, and comfort him whose whole peace hangs on one word—one look of pardon and affection from his only child, his idol."

The girl shuddered visibly.

"Not yet, not yet," she said. "Do not ask it. It is too much. He has done me such injury. I cannot."

"Gwenda, be true to yourself and your duties," he said, firmly. "Rise to the standard that Heaven has made for you, to the nobility of true, unselfish life, of the pure affection that Heaven has implanted in you, the duties that it has given to you."

There was something inspiring in the words and tone.

Gwenda gave one quick glance at his face and there was a flash from her own eyes that proved to him she responded in a measure to his words.

But still the crushing sorrow was there, the shrinking from the repugnant contact with the disgraced one, whom she had never even known or learnt to love as a child.

"Where is he? Tell me," she said, at last, in a low tone, and with averted eyes.

He hesitated.

"I scarcely dare give you the name of what would be so strange in your ears," he said, doubtfully. "But still, if it is really your wish, you shall have the means of fulfilling it."

And he hastily wrote on a piece of paper that lay on the table near him the name of a place that was certainly most foreign and unknown to the heiress of Fern Place.

"It is there that you will find whenever it is your pleasure to seek him," he returned, "at any rate for some days to come. But," he added, "you should keep it secret or it may be a clue for his enemies to seek his destruction. Farewell. I leave it in your own hands, Gwenda."

And with a lingering look, and a pressure of the small hand that lay cold and passive in his, he slowly left the room and the house.

Gwenda remained for some minutes in a deep, abstracted thought.

But there was scarcely the heart-broken and helpless misery in her fair young features that had marked

their expression one brief hour since. A more calmly thoughtful, if a still sad and hopeless expression came over her face.

She leaned her head on her hand with a deep consideration in her attitude and look.

"He does not know all," she said. "he does not know all; but still he is right, at least, in many things, quite right. I must think."

It was a sad struggle in the young heart, such as no one could appreciate.

But, as Gilbert Dorrington had said, it was but straining up the latent strength and power which had hitherto lain dormant.

Time alone could prove what the result of that long deliberation might be.

At the moment it seemed to induce a most particular mode of action.

The bell was rung, and ere the servant appeared, his young lady's face and manner had regained their usual calm dignity.

"Let the carriage be made ready instantly. I am going to call on Mr. St. John," she said, quietly.

And then, without farther delay, she hastened to her dressing-room, and desired her maid to bring her the most elaborate of her numerous visiting dresses.

The girl was by this time tolerably inured to her young lady's peculiar ways, and made no outward demur to the order.

And when the toilet was completed and Gwenda fully ready for her expedition it was impossible to imagine a fairer or more engaging and high-bred creature to grace the station in which she had been placed.

Even the servants who were so accustomed to her beauty and her youthful elegance of bearing were struck by the new aspect of their young lady.

"She looks like a princess, to say nothing of a marchioness," was the lady's maid's soliloquy, and it was fully endorsed by the footmen and grooms, who watched her drive off from the door on her headlong, determined drive. Had they guessed the truth the perplexity would have been greater still.

"I am so sorry that Helen is out. It is very good of you to honour an old fogie like me with a visit," said Mr. St. John, as he quickly led the way into the music room, which he considered as the most attractive apartment in the house. "But," he added, "I shall very much like to ask you to try this new air from 'Marta.' I believe it would exactly suit your voice and style," and he drew the song towards the desk of the open piano and led the young girl towards it with old-fashioned gallantry.

It was certainly no ordinary task to try the voice in a new and difficult song when the strength had been so recently shaken; but from some remarkable stimulus Gwenda proved herself equal to the emergency.

Her fingers scarcely shook nor her voice gave way even in the more trying parts of the novel music just before her.

Indeed there seemed an almost feverish energy in her tones and manner which was scarcely explicable from any ordinary excitement.

"Capital! I never heard you sing better," exclaimed the enthusiastic amateur. "You have a wonderful voice and excellent method, Miss Lorraine."

Gwenda neither blushed nor disdained the praise. There was a very different expression in the tone in which she replied:

"Do you really think so? Would it be considered that I sing well, Mr. St. John?"

"I should rather think so," he answered, quickly. "I can tell you that the public have lost a first-rate artist by your being born to fortune, Miss Lorraine."

"And if I were to try now, what then? Is it too late?" she asked, quickly.

"Certainly not. You are just about the age for such a debut," he said, "especially as your voice has been so well trained in your early education. I am no mean judge I flatter myself, and I do not hesitate to give you such a verdict."

She was silent for a moment or so.

"Mr. St. John," she began again, "you have been very kind to me. You have a daughter of your own. I—I think you would do for me what you would desire should be her fate were she in need. Can I trust you with a strange request?" she went on, mournfully.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," he returned, with some slight surprise in his tone and manner, "but I hope you will not tell me of any very Utopian fancy that I should be obliged to refuse."

"No," she returned, calmly, "you need not be afraid, Mr. St. John. It is in sober earnest that I would speak to you, and you will soon find out why I have cause to tax your kindness. But you must trust me so far—you must not ask me to explain the reasons now," she went on, quickly. "I come to ask

you if you could procure me some such engagement as you speak of."

He opened his eyes in astonishment.
"You!" he said, "You! the heiress of Fern Place and of thousands a year. This is some foolish nonsense that I must not gratify, my dear. Do not ask any such nonsense."

Gwenda shook her head.

"I told you," she said, "that you must trust me. I do not look—do I?—like one who is wild or jesting. My heart is not light enough for that."

"But Lord Brunton! what would he say to such a wild fancy?" remonstrated the gentleman.

"Lord Brunton has no more to say in anything that concerns me than yourself—nay, not so much, for I am here to ask your consent and assistance," replied the girl calmly.

Mr. St. John was a gentleman. He could not bring himself to torture the fair young girl by any minute questionings into what did not concern him to inquire; and, as she rightly said, there was something in Gwenda's new, indefinable expression and manner which forbade the idea of any levity in her plans, however mistaken the ideas might be.

"Pray is your guardian to hear of this fancy before I carry it out?" he asked, suddenly.

"He shall be informed of my new life; he is sure to approve. It would be no use doing otherwise," she replied, calmly.

"You mean he would not blame me if I were to carry out your wishes?" he asked. "I ask you on your honour and faith, for it is no light thing to undertake where a young creature like you is in question," he asked, firmly.

"On my honour and faith, the only guardian I have would not only forgive but he would be absolutely forced to urge me to some such proceeding," she replied, with her large, clear eyes fixed on his as if to challenge him to doubt her truth.

He shook his head gravely.

"I am sorry," he said, "very sorry at such a mystery being cast over you in your early youth, my dear child. I would not pain you even by hazarding a doubt or a surmise as to your motives; but I cannot but fear that either some deep trouble is at hand for you, or else that you are risking the whole future of your life for a rash fancy. However, I am bound to believe in such a look and tone as you plead with, so we will at once dismiss argument and come to real facts. What sort of engagement do you mean, Miss Loraine?" he asked, "a public one or merely a kind of private and amateur style of commencing your musical career?"

"Call me Gwenda, please," she exclaimed, eagerly. "I cannot bear anything else just now. And as to the rest, I only want what will bring in money, money," she went on, feverishly. "Money and fame—something to make me forget."

"Poor child, poor child!" he said, half-ambly. "So you would let ambition stand for love, is it so? But never mind, time alone can show the emptiness of the bubble," he continued, as if to himself rather than to her.

Then turning more fully towards her, he said, seriously:

"If you are content to work and to place yourself under the guidance of a first-rate professor for a short time, I believe I can procure you a very advantageous engagement with a man I know well and have served more than once materially. And that will lead to fame and fortune, if you are anxious to win them, and do not tire of the ascent up the weary hill."

"No, no, the more difficult, the more engrossing the better," she returned, eagerly. "Only let it be soon—soon; that is all I ask."

"Youth—youth," he said, "ever jumps at the present. Well, I will lose no time, my dear, in making my arrangements and inquiries, and I will come and let you know as early as possible what is the result."

"Thanks, thanks," she exclaimed, eagerly. "But I will come again soon. I will not give you the trouble to let me know. I will come to you in a week—shall I?" she pleaded, as she rose to go.

"Yes, if you do not hear in the meantime," he replied, gravely. "It might not be so long, and were the negotiation once set on foot, there will be no time to lose. Farewell, my dear child," he added, with fatherly tenderness of manner. "I am perhaps doing wrong, but I cannot resist your spell, like an old idiot as I am."

CHAPTER XLVI.

Oh, say not woman's false as fair,
That like the sea she ranges,
Still seeking flowers more sweet and rare,
As fickle fancy changes.
Ah, no! the love that first can warm
Will leave her bosom never,
No second passion e'er can charm;
She loved and loves for ever.

It was late on that eventful night, and when all the family and household were wrapped, or supposed to

be wrapped in slumber, that Lady Maud Dorrington quietly left her room, and proceeded to a chamber in the same wing of the building, with a noiseless, but by no means hurried step.

She knew tolerably well that there was no danger of her meeting the only person of whom she had any dread.

Bernard's apartments were so entirely removed from her own that he could scarcely by any possibility find himself in her neighbourhood, even were the time such as to render it probable that he was anywhere save in his own bed.

And for the rest, an excuse would be easily found, even if the daughter of the house did choose to leave her room at an unusual time, and be found in an unusual place.

She was dressed simply in a loose peignoir over her deep black skirt, her hair had been arranged for the night, and was coiled simply with classic grace round her small head.

She carried a small basket in one hand, and a large key was in the other, half-concealed by the lamp that lighted her along the passages she traversed.

Rapidly as she glided along, there was no apparent hurry or alarm in her face or movements, and when she at last stopped at a door, and applying the key admitted herself into a lonely passage from which another suite branched off, the sudden flash of light that came from an open door near fell upon a face as calm and resolved as a brave earnestness of purpose alone could explain, under such circumstances.

Lord Saville came forward in an instant, for it was the fugitive who tenanted that open room, though it would have been very difficult to recognize in that novel garb the high-born lover of Laura, the betrothed of Lady Maud.

He wore the dress of one of the rustic peasants of the place, his hair was concealed under a wig that had once been used by Bernard at a masquerade, and the pale wanness of his features was a yet more disguising change than his novel dress.

"You are ready, I see. Take this basket, and come at once," she said, in a calm, low tone. "We have no time to spare, but there is nothing to fear now, nothing!"

And she quickly prepared to lead the way from the room.

But Sholto stopped her for a moment.

"Stay, Maud, then, noble girl. Hear me for one moment, ere I trust myself to your guidance," he said quickly. "I would just say this much now, when I may perhaps part from you for ever. I was not at all false and guilty, Maud, bad as you must think me. I believed that you were only accepting me from mercenary views, but I could never have seen poor Laura more after our marriage, never!" he repeated, fervently. "And now, Maud, that I know you as you are, now that I love you my all in life of comfort, Maud, I dare only beg this much. If I can prove my innocence before the world, if I can come again to you with clean hands and with unstained name, I will then woo you over again. I will try to deserve and to win you as my loved and honoured bride," he went on, hastily. "And if not, if I cannot vindicate my name, at least I can free your brother from any blame. I can endow you with the miserable gold that is so valueless to me, and then—then I will die in solitude and exile, but still remembering you, blessing you to my last hour, and praying for your happiness, sweet Maud."

The girl literally trembled with the effort to control her emotions and keep back the tears that rushed up into her eyes. But she did prove her coolness by a noble effort, and placing her hand in Sholto's she bent forward to receive a brief caress, the first, and as it seemed probable the last, she would receive from his lips.

Then she hastily turned away from him, and, with a half-sign to follow, she led the way from the room, through a back staircase which led from the inner apartment down to a small side door, for which she produced a sort of pass-key, and then quietly emerging into the open air, she led him through the back garden belonging to the kitchen premises and along a short way which wound round the orchard that was attached to that part of the grounds, and where, for a brief moment, she stopped in the shelter of the trees to give him a few brief directions.

"There will be a boy and horse and cart waiting for you at the corner of the park," she said. "You may trust him as yourself, for he would have his tongue cut out rather than betray me or anyone I committed to him. He will drive you to Shrewsbury or Kingsmill, it matters not which, and from there you can easily get to Liverpool and make your way from the country before your flight can be known. And when you are once on safe ground, for my sake, you will not expose yourself to farther danger, even to prove your innocence."

He shook his head reproachfully.

"That were not spoken like Maud Dorrington," he said, "like the woman you have proved yourself in woe or weal, in sorrow and in joy. Better death than a dishonoured life!"

She gave a wan smile.

"Perhaps," she said, "perhaps. Well, let it be as your own better nature dictates. I have done far more than risk my safety for you, Lord Saville," she said, "I have conquered woman's nature and have believed you from my very heart when you told me of your innocence and your self-conquest. And if you owe me anything it will be repaid by your calm prudence when danger is near. Now go, and Heaven protect and help you!"

He lingered for a few more instants ere he bade her farewell. The germs of a purer, more natural love than he had felt for Laura de Fontane were springing up in his heart and already yielding their proper fruit.

And, with the respect he would have shown to a princess, he pressed her hand to his lips, and murmuring a few words of grateful thanks, he hastened from the spot.

And Lady Maud slowly returned to the house with a fund of happy thoughts welling up in her heart, despite the deep sadness and anxiety of the recent events that had crowded so rapidly on each other.

He appreciated her at last.

She was all to him now—yes, even while the image of the murdered Laura was fresh and vivid in his memory he acknowledged that she should win his love—that, as her woman instinct told her, it was in truth gushing at the spring, only waiting for a vent to overflow at its very source.

Maud's whole young heart was his own. It was yielded to him when amidst disdain and scorn and injury.

There could be little doubt of her happiness in the certainty her affection was returned, albeit the knowledge would but serve to deepen the pain and anxiety she would feel on his account.

Ah! woman is so completely a creature of love and feeling, that the worst, the only hopeless and unbearable wounds are those that stab to the core the vulnerable part in which lies the sole power to fatally wound.

Lord Saville pursued his way in strict obedience to the directions of his fair guide.

And as it appeared, there was no doubt in the working of the arrangements she had made.

The guide with his rustic vehicle was at the spot she had indicated.

Sholto quickly assumed his seat, with a brief direction to the lad to drive in the direction of Bridgenorth, which was scarcely farther than Shrewsbury, and as it seemed scarcely more distance from the Hove.

The horse was evidently accustomed to very different vehicles from the humble cart that followed his steps on the present occasion.

He displayed at once strength and courage in no ordinary degree, such as belonged rather to a thoroughbred than to a rustic-bred animal, and the road to Bridgenorth was traversed in about the smallest space of time that was possible for one animal, however powerful, to accomplish.

At last they reached the old town at daybreak.

The boy asked fresh directions of his passenger, and Sholto, after a moment's pause, thought it safer to drive to the railway station at once, and secure his continuous journey in the shortest possible time.

The boy of course obeyed.

Lord Saville was driven to the chosen station then, and perhaps not till then, did the chance of discovery and risk in that public spot occur to him. He knew that a warrant had been granted against him, and though there could be but little doubt that it was but languidly enforced, yet, it was available for any evil-disposed person who might have an interest in his imprisonment.

The very attention that might be drawn to his dress and appearance would be unfavourable for him, and Sholto decided after mature thoughts that it was safest for him to discard the dress so foreign to his station and position.

There would be less attention attracted by a gentleman in ordinary costume than by a rustic, in whom the style of his superiors unmistakably peeped forth.

Thus it was, shorn of the disguising wig and the rustic costume covering his Parisian-cut habiliments, that he appeared at the waiting-room and demanded his ticket in due time of the station-master, when the window opened for the issue.

"First to London—two pounds five!" said the abrupt voice of the Salopian.

And Lord Saville paid the money, obtained the desired pass, and turned to the platform, where no other passengers had as yet demanded the same requisite security.

The very solitude gave him courage. It seemed too utterly absurd to imagine that any one would discern him in that quiet station at that time. And he paced up and down the platform lost in a labyrinth of thought as to the past and future that fairly engrossed his whole mind.

He paused for a moment at each turn ere he resumed his "quarter-deck" walk, and glanced around at the clock and in wondering search for any future companions in the coming journey.

The look having seemed to prove that any such expectations was groundless, he determined after another promenade to take up his station in the waiting-room overlooking the platform till the train should be forthcoming.

But just as the idea was being carried out and he was carelessly lounging into the waiting-room, all idea of danger being gradually lulled as the interval was fast drawing to a close a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a too familiar voice sounded in his ear.

"Well met, my lord. We will continue our journey together, or not at all!"

And the next moment Count Albert de Fontaine and Sholto, Lord Saville, stood face to face.

There was a dead silence for some minutes. Sholto stood literally paralyzed by the sudden shock.

The dreaded and detested lover of Laura de Fontaine was there, with his calm, scoffing face, his well preserved figure, his deep mourning garb.

He felt that all was lost, that the hope of escape had vanished.

And he, the innocent and high-born descendant of a noble race was to be condemned to a disgraceful trial, and in all probability to a terrible punishment.

Count Albert resumed his greeting ere Lord Saville had recovered from the stunning bewilderment of the meeting.

"I scarce expected to find you so near to the Lady Maud," he said, "there were many circumstances in the past that would seem to have made such conduct extraordinary. I must now however request you to accompany me to London, my lord."

"I do not recognize any such right," said the young nobleman, passionately. "Man, you are too fully unbacked to deceive me more. Laura's misery is but too fully explained, and the bondage in which she was held fatally proved."

"It is a wonder that you dare venture to mention her very name, bold lord," returned the count, with a total change of manner. "They say that the blood of the murdered rushes out at the touch of the murderer, and I should have small wonder if the very spirit of my deceased wife were raised at your daring hardihood. But a truce to all such mockery," he added, angrily, "the state of affairs is too much of a tragedy to be thus treated. My lord, be advised, as you have no alternative but a fatal resistance. Yield to necessity and accompany me quietly on my journey to London."

(To be continued.)

JOSEPHINE BEAUVILLIERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Juliette's Secret," "The Rose of Kemdale," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Evil and the powers of evil, obtain in this world a wonderful supremacy for a time, and it seems often as if the innocent were but hapless tools of the wicked and designing. *Carleton Pride.*

THE dwarf started back when he perceived the vision of loveliness which went by the name of Marian Flintheart. His face, purple and convulsed by passion, became pale and set.

Marian perceived the impression that her charms had made upon this eccentric little Russian, and her eyes sparkled with triumph.

"I hope you are not in any trouble, sir," she said. "You appear distressed."

"I—I—I," stammered the dwarf, "am searching for a person who has fled from the care of her protectress."

"You are an interested searcher, I suspect," said Marian, gaily, and she darted upon him a look brilliant and mischievous, which at once bewildered and inflamed the rich Russian pigmy.

Good Heavens! could it be possible that the prognostications of the Lady Vengea were fulfilling themselves? Had his heart gone forth at once with a strange rebound from the keeping of that ungrateful Josephine, who had flung it back to him as a useless bauble? Had his heart been caught, as it were, in passing by that slight, graceful creature, with her torrents of flaxen hair, and her large, jet, wonderful eyes?

"Beautiful girl," cried the dwarf, "spirit of Averna, clad in the form of an angel of light, whence do you come, and whither are you bound?"

He asked the question in a tone which he meant to be taken for one of banter and raillery.

He was not willing to have it supposed that he had, at once fallen in love, headlong, immersed, helpless with this extraordinary-looking girl, so weirdly beautiful, so wonderfully graceful, so totally unlike all the other women he had ever seen in the flesh.

"I saw a painting of you in Italy," he cried, enthusiastically. "It was in the palace of Prince Pietro, near Florence. It was the portrait of a lovely woman with great black liquid eyes, and waves on waves of richest flaxen hair falling like a curtain almost to her feet; the lip, the nostril, the smile, the round, slender throat, the graceful bust, the small waist, and the wild, bright smile—all are yours. I stood half an hour enraptured before that portrait, and I asked the Prince Pietro where was the original. He shrugged his shoulders and informed me that she had been dead these four hundred years. She was an ancestress of mine, he said. She is reported to have poisoned her mother, and to have cut her husband's throat. Strange tales they tell in Italy. Some of these women seemed to have been clothed in forms of angels, and possessed with the spirits of demons. But do you spring from Italian ancestry, mademoiselle?"

"You compliment me highly," she cried, with a light laugh. "Look up at those rafters, where hang sides of bacon and strings of onions; look at this stone floor and those wooden chairs—surely my surroundings are not those of an Italian princess. Yonder kind friend, the worthy master of this house, has been to me a true benefactor. Without his bounty I must have starved when I came here a young and helpless girl. But now I am tired of a life of idleness and dependence, and I have advertised for a situation as companion or governess."

The pigmy count clasped his hands, and threw himself into an attitude of the utmost consternation.

"You a governess, you a companion!" he exclaimed. "Let us talk then henceforth of using a priceless Sévres vase as a pot for storing onions or flour. Let us take the Queen's mantle and use the silk and cloth of gold for a house flannel. Nay, nay, you must never earn your bread." He bent upon her a look of intense adoration. "You must sit as a queen, and your worshippers must come to your footstool in humble admiration."

"I desire nothing better," cried Marian, with a light laugh. "But where is my throne, and where are my worshippers?"

The dwarf bowed almost to the ground.

"Here at least is one worshipper," said he, placing his hand upon his heart.

"That is pleasant," exclaimed Marian. "One admirer at least is something in this wilderness. But I should be very glad if you could show me my throne."

"Your throne is here also," repeated the dwarf; "for you are enthroned in my heart!"

Marian laughed. "A truce to these compliments," she exclaimed. Potowski, in short, was falling madly in love with the fascinating Marian Flintheart.

Josephine, watching him through her little loophole, perceived the same expression on the count's face which had so often illumined it while he had been in her presence. She resolved, however, not to show herself. It was possible that the sight of her might revive her old influence.

She resolved that the count should not behold her again until his fancy and affections, and what he called his heart, were firmly fixed upon the extraordinary young girl now before him.

The farmer could not help regarding with a smile of contempt the pigmy dwarf as offering his hand to the beautiful Marian he led her out from the kitchen into the pleasant garden, where the pink fruit blossoms were waving in the warm spring air.

Josephine let herself now out of the store-room cupboard. She was welcomed affectionately by her benefactor and his wife. But the farmer perfectly agreed with her that it would be well for her to keep out of the way of the count.

"But we must look after Marian," cried the good lady of the house. "That count is a perfect imp of darkness. He may work some mischief to the poor girl!"

The farmer shook his head.

"I have no fear for Miss Marian," he said, "she will look after herself. If the count wished to marry her she would marry him. Anything for jewels, carriages and a gay life. But if the count meant her any harm she would pretty soon give him a piece of her mind. She would never flatter or cajole him in that case."

"But he might carry her off," cried the worthy mistress of Rye House Farm.

"We will take care that nothing of that sort occurs," returned the farmer.

The servants of the count had meanwhile followed their master into the garden, and there he had dismissed them with a message for the Lady Vengea.

Meanwhile Marian, seated upon a green bank, under the shelter of a budding elm, leaned against the trunk of a tree in a graceful and easy attitude. The count knelt upon the yellow gravel path.

He ventured to take her hand, he poured forth a rhapsody which astonished the light and trifling girl. She listened and laughed. She could scarcely credit her ears.

She could hardly believe in her good fortune when he made her an offer of his hand and his heart when he vowed that he would pave her steps with gold, crown her with diamonds, and that she should absolutely sit as a queen.

For a moment the girl was dazzled, giddy, overwhelmed. She could hardly believe her ears.

Quickly rallying, she called all her wonderful self-esteem to her aid.

She told herself that her beauty was dazzling and unique enough to purchase for her a crown. If she did not marry this count probably she would marry a prince.

"Still," thought she within herself, wisely, "a bird in hand," and she finished the proverb in a significant whisper to herself.

So, looking at the count and smiling, she promised to consider this proposal.

She told him to come again the next day and every day.

He wildly entreated her to marry him within the week at the parish church.

"And then, beautiful Marian," said he, "we will fly away from this country, where I have met nothing but disappointment."

"He wishes to fly from the vengeance of Lady Vengea," thought Marian to herself, "and he is right. I should breathe more freely myself when I am away from her vicinity."

"Let us go to Italy, count. Yonder northern sky is blue," and she pointed up towards it with a smile which the Russian thought seraphic, "but how faint, how poor a blue compared with the deep azure tinting of the heaven that arches over Italy! Take me with you to Florence, to Genoa, to Venice; let us pass the summer in seeing all that is beautiful in the sunny south. After that, for the winter, you shall crown me with diamonds if you will, and I will reign as a queen of fashion in London. Paris would have been my dream, but poor Paris has lately been the city of famine and pestilence, of battle, murder and sudden death."

"How eloquently you speak, angelic Marian," cried the count, in a rapture.

And it was true. Marian was one of those women who only find voice and power, who only learn how to speak, when they find themselves in the presence of mankind—men, that is, whom they wish to fascinate.

Listless and moping and shrewish-tongued had Marian ever showed herself towards her benefactor and his wife and their rough boys.

She had never been bright and fascinating. It had indeed been impossible to love or even to like this cold, ungracious, peevish, selfish girl.

But she was like a second Cleopatra in her power of captivating and entrancing men.

The count remained with her all the morning, and went away intoxicated, delicious with love.

His Russian servants had been faithful to him—they had not betrayed the secret of his new infatuation. And yet when the count appeared before the Lady Vengea she fixed her piercing black eyes upon him, and her stern mouth smiled an iron smile.

They were standing in the rich green satin drawing-room; the day was waning, the sun was sinking.

"I have waited for you all day," said the Lady Vengea. "And now it is near the dinner-hour. Have you heard any tidings of the girl?"

The count looked down upon the splendid carpet, and he shook his head.

"The girl is nowhere to be found," he said.

The Lady Vengea's smile grew dreadful.

"Have you searched for her?" she said, hoarsely.

"Nay," cried the count. "I have threatened the farmer from whose house we believed her to have taken refuge with ruin; but it is of no use, she is not there."

"It is of no use?" repeated Lady Vengea, with a bitter emphasis, and in an inquiring tone.

The count tried to look up at her bravely, insolently.

"Where am I to find her?" he demanded, roughly.

"She detests and despises me. She would rather kill herself than marry me. I have been mad to think about her. I recovered from my insanity to-day, when I discovered the impossibility of retaking her. And now I am determined for the future to be wiser, to eschew the society of women, was

only despise me on account of my pigmy size. I am resolved to return to Russia at the end of this week!"

Lady Vengea's smile grew more and more awful. "Oh! you are resolved to go to Russia," she cried. And her tone was marked by a deadly and freezing politeness.

"Yes," cried the count, boisterously, "I am going to Russia."

"And it is forbidden me to inquire the name of the bride who is to accompany you?" demanded Lady Vengea.

The count stamped his foot upon the ground, and his eyes flashed.

These two violent spirits confronted each other as might two savage beasts at bay.

"Are you going to tyrannize over me and coerce me as you have done all your life everybody who has come under your influence?" demanded he, fiercely. "Nay, madam, you shall find that you shall not coerce me!"

"Ungrateful hound," she cried, still smiling her dreadful smile. "And you shall die a hound's death."

The dwarf broke into a harsh, mocking laugh. "You forget," he said, "that I have a retinue of servants here, equal to yours in number, who will defend me from your murderous attacks. But I will run no risk of treachery, Lady Vengea—if lady you are—which I doubt much. You have assumed the name of a dead countess, whom you know died abroad in obscurity. You are no Lady Vengea; you are an adventuress, a fortune-teller. You have made your money by shuffling cards—Ha!"

For the infuriated woman had drawn from her side a steel poniard, glittering on the hilt with diamonds. The count was as quick. From his side he produced a poniard, sharp in the blade and brilliant on the hilt as that of his antagonist.

Amethysts, pink topazes, and diamonds, emeralds, and rubies formed the rainbow tints of this magnificent instrument of death.

"One thrust," said he, "one, and if you ever shuffle cards again you must indeed bear a charmed life, for the point is poisoned."

In spite of herself Lady Vengea drew back, and a shade of pallor spread over her face.

She put aside her own poniard, in token of truce for the present. And the Russian count sheathed his own.

"It is dangerous quarrelling with me," he said, "as I think everybody who knows me will admit. Peace is your best policy."

"Insolent dwarf!" cried the Lady Vengea.

"Cheating adventuress!" exclaimed the dwarf, with a laugh.

The Lady Vengea went to one of her inlaid cabinets and drew out that wonderful pack of cards, painted by the Roman artist, and for which she had paid so many hundreds of pounds.

She threw them out recklessly upon the table, without any especial counting or arrangement; there they were, those scenes of courtly grandeur, those exquisite landscapes, those crowded streets, those homely and comfortable interiors.

"I paid the artist," she said, "fifty guineas a-piece for each of those cards. Now then, listen to what they tell you, Count Potowski."

"Miserable superstition!" cried the rich Russian dwarf.

Lady Vengea placed her finger upon one card, which represented a marriage ceremony in a country church; then she pointed to another card, which represented a man hiding behind a curtain, and grasping a poniard in his hand. To yet another card she pointed; it represented a lonely white tomb, sheltered by a yew tree.

"Marriage," she said, "jealousy, death! I have read your fortune."

The count burst into a loud, mocking laugh.

"After this kind prophecy," cried he, "you cannot wonder at my refusing any longer to partake of your generous hospitality. I will move out within an hour, I and my retinue. I shall establish myself in an hotel in the nearest post-town of Langley, for the village inn does not offer sufficient accommodation."

Lady Vengea looked at him fixedly.

"Ha, ha!" she cried, "you haunt the neighbourhood then still. Then the attraction, the fascination, larks in this village. What is the name of your new divinity?"

"Angelica," cried the count. "Divine Angelica." Lady Vengea shrugged her shoulders, and her thin lip curled bitterly.

"The angelic element then," she said, "will mingle with the diabolic. If the impish count, the Satanic dwarf, the snake whom I have cherished in my breast should unite himself with some saintlike maiden, such as you describe, we shall see what the end of it will be."

The count stood now at the door. He bowed to the Lady Vengea.

The smile upon his lip was certainly sinister enough to warrant her ladyship in calling him the Satanic dwarf.

"Adieu, madame," he said. "Adieu, adieu. You have made an enemy, an enemy with boundless power, enormous wealth, indomitable will."

Then the count left the room.

Within two hours from that time Potowski and his servants, together with all their valuable baggage, had left Tempestcloud Castle.

The village of Yatton, where stood the Rye Farm, was quite two miles from any station.

The count hired a vehicle at the country inn to convey his luggage and servants to the railway; there they were to await his arrival.

Meanwhile he betook himself to the Rye House. He entered suddenly into the general sitting-room where the family were assembled at tea.

A cheerful meal it seemed. The fire had been lighted, the hot buttered cakes were smoking on the table, the fragrant steam of the tea was rising.

There were the farmer, his comely wife, his ruddy boys, and two beautiful young ladies, both of whom the Russian dwarf had loved so passionately.

Josephine, dressed in that gray robe which she had bought from her friend, looked lovelier than ever.

Her cheek was rounder and possessed a more peach-like bloom than in the days when, thinly clad and poorly fed, she had laboured to support her parents in Northwick St. John's.

Her deep blue eyes shone with a gleam of fear on the entrance of the count, but a second glance at him quieted her terror.

The count started indeed when he saw her, but he immediately averted his eyes, and eagerly sought the fair face of Marian.

That azure angel had not altered her toilet since the morning. She looked radiant.

The count sought her side.

First of all, however, he asked leave of the farmer to sit down and partake of the family meal, with the politeness of a prince.

The farmer, with blunt honesty, and at the same time with kindly hospitality, addressed the count.

"Sir," said he, "my home, my house, and my table are open to every honest person who needs hospitality in passing through our northern village—every one, that is, who knows how to accept a kindness in the same spirit in which it is offered. But this morning you insulted and threatened me, and all in a manner unjustifiable. Have you altered your tactics, that you come here now as a friend? If so, why have you altered them? and what proof can you give me of the honesty of your intentions?"

The count answered, and he answered truthfully. He stated that he had been mad, insane, in having dared to love and to persecute with his love the lady who had uniformly rejected his addresses—here he bowed to Josephine—but he went on to state that that day he had fallen desperately enamoured of the farmer's beautiful protégée, Marian. The result was that, since Miss Flitheart responded to his affection, he desired to lead her to the hymeneal altar within the next three days, if possible.

Under these circumstances the farmer agreed to receive the count as a guest. He sat down therefore to tea.

He passed an hour or two with Marian, and after that he repaired to the village inn, where he hired a carriage which conveyed him to Langley.

Day after day found him at the Rye House.

Events marched quickly. Before Sunday the count and Marian were man and wife and had departed for London.

There was not much true generosity in the Russian dwarf. He never forgave Josephine for her persistent refusal of his advances. He owed her a grudge, and he was mean enough to treat her as a poor dependant, to ignore her existence in short.

Marian, without being mean, was so thoroughly selfish that she never thought of providing in any way for the benefit of Josephine. She did not even help her to find a situation. Although the count loaded her with money and jewels she never made Josephine a present of any sort.

Josephine, poor, proud, and high-souled, would never have accepted anything that came even indirectly from the count. But the offer was never made; and the bride and bridegroom departed, after having simply presented the farmer, the master of the Rye House, with a handsome gold watch.

And now came an answer to Josephine's advertisement in the papers. A person signing herself Catherine Walthew wrote to inquire into Miss Beauvilliers' qualifications, and whether they would enable her to accept a position as companion to a young lady. She must be musical, she must be able to read fluently, and to write a ladylike hand. Her

antecedents must be unexceptionable, her references of the best. Whereupon Josephine wrote, frankly stating that she was peculiarly placed, that it would be impossible for her to refer the applicant just then either to her parents or her late protectress, but she was in a position to prove her entire respectability and also that she was well qualified for the position which she sought.

There came an answer.

"Miss Catherine Walthew will be at the Shepherd's Hotel, at Langley, next Wednesday, and there would enter into an arrangement with Miss Beauvilliers if the interview proved satisfactory. Miss Beauvilliers was to bring a friend with her, and, if she had anything to fear, was on no account to come without a good escort."

Josephine, therefore, accompanied by her good friend the farmer and his eldest son, arrived at the Shepherd's Hotel, Langley, on the day named. She asked to be shown to No. 17, the room mentioned in the letter.

It was a very lovely May day. The High Street in the little town looked bright and cheerful.

Josephine mounted the stairs gaily, entered the room, followed by the farmer and his eldest boy, and then, when she saw who had come to meet her, she started back, uttering a faint cry.

Was it astonishment, fear, grief, or joy which was expressed in that tone?

(To be continued.)

THE BLENKARNE INHERITANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlingcourt's Will," "The Ebony Casket," "The Secret of Schwarzenburg," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DAISY's kind heart fully sympathized with Algon's desire to vindicate Adam's innocence. She was even desirous herself to visit Colonel Blenkarne, although upon another subject.

"Let me go with you!" cried Daisy, eagerly, remembering her own errand to the same gentleman, and, seeing his look of surprise, she added, with an ingenuous blush: "I have an excellent reason for the wish, which I can explain to you only after I have accomplished my errand."

"You shall go, certainly," he answered, affectionately. "There is no wish of yours that should be denied, if I had my sovereign will consulted in the shaping of events. But then, fairy princess that you are, you are safe without my help. When are you going to order my lost belt to be brought to me?" he added, playfully.

Daisy began a careless laugh, but in the midst of it she stopped short, her cheeks flushing hotly, the dark-blue eyes dilating and deepening till they were almost purple.

"A belt—a belt!" she ejaculated. "Why, this is also a belt, and is to be given to Colonel Blenkarne."

And then to his astonishment she rose and ran away as fast as possible to her room, and shut the door carefully behind her.

"What has come over the fairy princess?" he queried, and sauntered out to the favourite seat beneath the chestnut tree to wait for her reappearance.

He threw himself down carelessly under the shade of the broad mass of dense foliage, looking up idly through the fringe formed by the lower leaves at the blue sky. His eyes had a rapt expression in their depths as of one who, while looking at nature's fairest visions, still beholds them not. His whole spirit was filled by sweet dreams in which the fair face of Daisy was ever present. Hopes and "fears that kindle hopes" alternated in his bosom. Could he but secure the love of this sweet girl he felt that life would hold a bright future for him. All pride of caste was forgotten in the mighty access of passion that now held his whole being in its entrancing fetters. Many plans for the future flitted through his thoughts, but dominant over all was the resolve that he would battle with all adverse fate and win her by a chivalric struggle against the world.

Meantime Lady Blenkarne had taken her seat in the carriage opposite Madame Blanc, who smiled grimly.

Her ladyship looked earnestly at the wrinkled, ill-natured visage, endeavouring vainly to gather from the inscrutable features some hint for her guidance; but in vain.

The piercing eyes of Madame Blanc were fixed on her own as though they would read her soul.

At last Lady Blenkarne said:

"I am here, aunt, as you desired."

Madame Blanc looked at her vindictively.

"Your ladyship did well to come obediently," she said. "Your curiosity, it seems, was easily roared

concerning the cottage inmates, or did your desire to visit it occur simultaneously with the knowledge that my carriage was behind you and might hinder your Quixotic visit to Colonel Guy Blenkarne? I will take the belt, if you please, my lady."

The tone was stern, deadly in earnest. Her ladyship looked out of the window eagerly, Oh, for the sight of but one of her score of trusty servants!

But they were rolling slowly along the quiet, rural, deserted lane, and no one was in sight.

Blaise, the coachman, was devoted to Madame Blanc.

Well enough Lady Blenkarne knew this, as well as she read the desperate determination in the black eyes that shone and glittered from out that shrivelled, cadaverous, horrible face.

She had done wrong in coming. Far better would it have been to have defied her there at the cottage with the young gentleman to defend her.

But she had only thought about the safety of the belt, and had chosen to divert any suspicion of its presence there at her own expense. She set her lips now as grimly as Madame Blanc's, and something of the same resolute light flashed from her eyes, but she spoke calmly and quietly.

"Aunt, you may be sure if such a belt were in my possession I should only give it up to its lawful owner."

"I will take the belt!" reiterated Madame Blanc, thumping her cane upon the floor of the carriage.

Her ladyship quietly examined the carved handle of her sunshade, and did not lift her eyes to encounter the blazing wrath flaming upon her.

"My lady," spoke Madame Blanc, hoarsely, "this is no trifling matter. You know that I do not scruple to use any means in my power to accomplish an end I am set upon. And this is dearer to me than my heart's blood. If there were no other way, and I could only secure it by going to the scaffold to-morrow, I would go cheerfully, so I snatched that belt away for ever from those greedy Blenkarne fingers. I shall have it, if I set my menials to search your person to find it, or failing there, if I torture you till your dying lips confess its hiding-place."

The tone was terrible enough, the look which accompanied it more blood-freezing still. Lady Blenkarne grew a little paler, but preserved her resolute air. When they came out upon the highway they must surely meet some one. Her own carriage would soon be taking its way to the rendezvous she had appointed. Something must interfere. She would not allow her courage to fail.

"Your talk is wild and shocking enough, Madame Blanc," she said, "but you forget I am not an ignorant or superstitious simpleton to be frightened into submission to your wishes."

"The belt!" demanded Madame Blanc, fiercely; "is it with you now?"

She longed to answer No, but then she feared the keen wits of her persecutor would suspect that she had left it in the cottage, and she would not risk its safety. Longer time given to her, and the sweet-faced girl might accomplish the errand. No, it was best to allow the fierce old creature to believe it was with her there in the carriage.

"I have nothing in my possession that belongs to you," answered she, dauntlessly, glancing out eagerly, as she saw they were emerging upon the highway.

"Perverse simpleton!" cried Madame Blanc, "you bring upon yourself all you will have to endure."

Lady Blenkarne sprang to her feet, and hastily pulled up the glass window.

"Blaise, stop the carriage. I wish to leave it," she cried.

"Blaise, drive faster, let me see the mettle of your horses!" screamed madame, in her shrill voice.

And Blaise cracked his whip, and the horses broke into a gallop.

Madame Blanc laughed sardonically.

"Do you think to command my servants? Why, your ladyship only holds power over the idle tribe at Blenkarne Terrace through my consent. A word from me can drive you out. Stop and think what you are about."

"I have thought," returned Lady Blenkarne, deadly pale now, and her eyes glittering with excitement, "and I will no longer remain in this carriage. I will scream for help to the first person we meet."

And she stood up before the open window, and stretched out her hand with a handkerchief fluttering from it.

With a strength that seemed supernatural, those bony, claw-like hands pulled her back to the seat. The next instant a drenched handkerchief, reeking with some subtle essence which took away her strength and breath too, it seemed, was thrust over her face. She made one desperate struggle, but only cleared her eyes, and their last glimpse showed her fleeting consciousness her own carriage approaching.

Madame Blanc pulled down the lace veil over her

companion's white face, and then signalled to Blaise to stop the carriage.

This done she herself leaned out, and called to the Blenkarne coachman.

"My lady is in here with me. She bids me tell you that she has no farther occasion for you to-day. She is going home with me for a little visit. She will send when she wants you to come for her."

The coachman bowed, wheeled around, and drove home again. Discreet Blaise never glanced down from his box, and when the signal was given started into a trot again.

Lady Blenkarne, supported in an upright position by the cushion, sat there a helpless victim at the mercy of the savage old creature, who began promptly searching over her clothing and person after dropping the silken curtain at the window.

"Not here, not here! She has been cheating me!" she shrieked, when the fruitless search was finally relinquished. "Oh, she shall pay for this—she shall pay for this. On her own head be all the torture she shall endure."

And in the pitiable excess of her maniac rage she struck fiercely against the pale, insensible face, and even pinched the limp and powerless hands.

Then she dropped her head to her hands, and fell into a profound reverie, going back over every little look and word of the conversation held that day, and trying to find significance enough to direct her to the object of her search.

"She knows about it. She knows where it is, if it is not in her own possession. She shall tell me. I will spare no torture but I will make her tell me!" she muttered, and signalled again to drive faster.

Arrived at Cedar Knoll, Lady Blenkarne's helpless figure was lifted out, and carried into the sombre room where Madame Blanc received her few visitors.

"Lay her down upon the sofa, Blaise," commanded the mistress, as she stood glowering upon the pale face. "And leave me to attend her revival, which will come shortly."

But when she was left alone with her victim she made no efforts for her revival, but went to a drawer of the cumbersome old chest in the corner, and hunting around among queer deposits there, brought forth a singular little apparatus, at which she looked triumphantly.

"The old antiquarian thought I was buying it as a romantic relic of the Inquisition. Bah! I knew it would be a useful thing to have in the house. Will it fit my lady's dainty thumbs, I wonder? Well, well, the screws remedy all that. She shall understand, when she rouses, that this is no child's play. It is fortunate I have tried it before, and know how it works!"

And with the odious thing in her hands she went back to the sofa, and, fumbling there, soon had the steel bracelets fastened on those slender wrists, and the cruel caps adjusted to the shapely thumbs. Now she was ready for my lady to awaken, and, indeed, before she had quite finished the prostrate head had stirred, and the eyelids fluttered.

Madame Blanc stepped back coolly, her lips shut together tightly, just a little brighter, wicked gleam than usual in her uncanny eyes, and waited.

"Lucille," murmured her ladyship, in a bewildered voice, and then partially raised herself, with wide-open, inquiring eyes.

The movements stretched the chain which held the manacled wrist, and the pressure on the thumbs gave a sharp twinge of pain. That same instant her eyes reached the triumphant, demoniac countenance watching her.

Weak as she was from the ether inhaled, Lady Blenkarne started to her feet, her pallor chased away by the swift rush of the indignant blood.

"What does this mean?" she demanded, fiercely.

"You had fair warning, my lady. I told you the alternative," answered Madame Blanc, seating herself tranquilly.

Lady Blenkarne stared around the room with wild, questioning eyes.

"You are at Cedar Knoll," explained her persecutor. "Don't you remember I sent your carriage back? I told them you were going to make me a little visit, and that you would send when you wanted anything of them. And a pretty little visit it may be if you choose—or—it may be something else."

Her mind was still grasping at the explanation.

"But I was—in the carriage," she faltered.

"Oh, yes, and the carriage brought you here. You were inclined to be troublesome, something I never allow, as you should have considered. So I reduced you to a more tractable state. I hope by this time you are convinced of the foolishness of any attempt to thwart my wishes."

The glorious dark eyes swept the room, and rested on the window wistfully.

"My dear, you are not quite yourself yet," expostulated the grim mistress of the dreary place. "Don't you understand that you are at Cedar Knoll? You are entirely dependant upon my hospitality. I hope you will allow me to be polite and agreeable."

"My thumbs ache," said Lady Blenkarne, half-haughtly, half-entreatingly.

"Ah, yes, I daresay; but it is nothing to the anguish another turn of the screw will bring," was the cool rejoinder, accompanied by a sardonic smile.

"This is outrageous! Do you forget that you are liable to the law for such high-handed proceedings?" cried out her ladyship, passionately, and then turning suddenly to the door, she cried out sharply and fiercely: "Blaise! Amariah! Some of you come here! I will have you all arrested if you do not help me!"

The wild tones echoed drearily through the room, and as they died out Madame Blanc's shrill laughter pealed forth.

"Well, well, 'our young lady' has certainly forgotten old times, or does she believe the old woman has grown imbecile? There is no way of escape open to you. And I fear no danger to myself; no, not if you died under my torture. Now, will you understand that I am in earnest, and tell me where I can find that belt?"

Lady Blenkarne sank down upon the sofa again, and for a moment shuddered in dismay and terror. The next she lifted her manacled hands with a gesture full of grace and dignity, and said, defiantly:

"Do your worst. I have learned in bitterness and grief that wrong-doing obtains its sure punishment. Yours will come yet. I have nothing to tell you."

The cruel eyes snapped. With a panther-like bound, for that withered figure, she leaped forward and turned a screw set in the steel band. A moan of anguish escaped her ladyship's whitening lips, though she made heroic efforts to hush it.

"Will you tell me now, stubborn simpleton?" hissed the maniac.

"Aunt—aunt, I have no such belt in my possession, neither here nor at the Terrace. You are inflicting this wicked torture to no purpose," cried Lady Blenkarne, nearly wild with the racking pains that ran fiercely from her thumbs up to her very shoulders.

"But you have had it. You know where it is. Speak quickly, before I give another turn, which will make all before seem like comfort and bliss before its terrible agony."

And the frightful face bent over her menacingly. "Oh, cruel, pitiless, if I had but my hands!" murmured the beautiful sufferer.

"If," retorted Madame Blanc, scornfully, "you see that is just where the old woman, feeble and aged as she is, has such mastery. Strategy against strength any time. But I do not choose to dally. Once and for the last time I ask you to tell me where I can find that belt."

If she dared speak a falsehood—if she could relinquish her heroic determination! After all, what were they but her bitter maligners? The temptation was almost overwhelming.

Ernestine, Lady of Blenkarne, cast an appealing glance upwards, not so much for help out of this fiery trial as for strength to resist the temptation to confess the truth. Her pale lips moved in a husky whisper.

A flash of triumph kindled on Madame Blanc's sallow face. She put her ear close to the pallid lips and asked, eagerly:

"Where?"

But the words were not those she longed to hear. She caught their meaning at length.

"Merciful Father, help me to resist this torture! I will never tell!"

"Try another turn first," hissed the torturer; and with pitiless fingers gave another, and yet another turn of the screw.

"Blaise! Blaise!" cried out the rich voice, breaking into a shriek of anguish; and springing up she dashed wildly at the persecutor, but the next instant tottered and fell back, this time without aid of subtle drug, and sank senseless at madame's feet.

CHAPTER. XXX.

BLANNERHASSSET had made two brief journeys to Liverpool without explaining his business to the family, and each time he returned more melancholy and nervous, and unlike himself.

The hearts of the others were full of sympathy, and yearned to do something to alleviate his secret grief, but every open attempt at consolation seemed to distress him so keenly that they had all agreed to endeavour to appear as if they noticed no change. He grew thin and pale, with a woeful, haggard look, which clearly revealed the sleepless nights he passed.

Wymer especially was sorely distressed by this change in his blithe, open-hearted comrade, and racked his brain vainly to secure any probable solution of the mystery. Never a hint of the true cause entered his mind. On the day of Lady Blenkarne's visit to the cottage he was walking home from the town when he saw Blennerhasset coming out of the academy yard, just through from giving the boys their drill lesson.

Wymer, who was some few yards behind, was just about to call out for his friend to wait for him, when he saw a tall female emerge from the shaded roadside, and accost Blennerhasset, who seemed to recognize her with evident agitation. They walked together slowly, the woman lingering to keep pace with his halting step, and talked excitedly, for he saw her imploring gestures, and understood well enough by the nervous dash of his old comrade's hand across his forehead, an old trick he had laughed at many a time, how deeply agitated he must be.

"Who is the woman?" muttered Tom Wymer, wrathfully. "I'll take a look at her, and I'll find out what it is she is doing to torment poor old Arnold so. Tender-hearted old fellow, I've no doubt she's imposing upon him in some way. He wants me to send her away. He was always too soft with women-folks, who can be cunning—as foxes when they know they can twist a man round their finger. She is not going to impose upon Tom Wymer's comrade, I can tell her that."

And, as he thus soliloquized, he quickened his steps, and caught these words in Esther Sanderson's hard, metallic voice:

"I tell you you are sinning against every one. It is as cruel to them as to me and to her. I can't understand your cousin's calling you a brave man. I think you are cruel, cowardly. You are a man, and I am weak woman; but if I were in your place I could not rest an hour—a minute—until I had freed my mind from such a burden, and righted so grievous a wrong."

"What do you know about it?" burst passionately from Blennerhasset. "What do you know of the anguish and trouble I shall bring into a happy home—the more terrible because it is so utterly unexpected? Why can't you be quiet a little longer? Things are no worse than they have been for all these years for the rest of you."

"And so you are willing we should keep on being miserable because we have been so for so many years—to insure continued happiness to those who have been easy and comfortable all that time! Fine reasoning! Christian doctrine, Arnold Blennerhasset!" was the bitter rejoinder.

"It is cruel—yes, it is cruel, and I am a coward," muttered poor Blennerhasset, in a despairing tone. "But it is not on my own account, you understand that. Give me a little more time, and I shall find heart for the task."

"You have said that again and again. You asked at first only for a few days. Now the weeks have gone. It is no use to yield to you. I must think of poor Thomas watching and waiting out there in distant lands, and I must think of my own good name. I tell you I will only wait until to-morrow. If you do not speak then, I shall," was the reply, in firm, decided tones.

Blennerhasset groaned.

"What is it the woman is threatening, Arnold?" exclaimed Tom Wymer, plunging forward, his honest face flaming with friendly indignation.

"Tom!" ejaculated Blennerhasset, in a tone of horror, whirling around and staring wildly at his friend. Then he flung out his arms towards the woman, and cried: "Go! go! Leave us, I beg of you."

"I shall come again to-morrow," she answered, sullenly. "You may as well be prepared, and I shall bring the proofs with me."

"Go! go!" he commanded, hoarsely.

And Esther Sanderson, not without pitying compassion for him, turned slowly and left them.

Blennerhasset was obliged to lean a moment on his friend's arm, he was so utterly unnerved. When at length his trembling limbs would support him, he withdrew a little.

"Not yet, Arnold, not quite yet," said Wymer, softly; "you are hardly enough recovered. Poor fellow! poor old fellow! you're having the hardest battle of all the campaign."

And he took out his handkerchief, and, with all a woman's tenderness, wiped away the drops of perspiration that beaded the forehead of the other.

"Ay, Tom, the hardest of all; and the worst is I'm a coward," he returned, "as it wasn't in the old days."

"Pooh, pooh! Tom Wymer isn't going to be imposed upon in that style. The Jezebel hasn't hurt you, Arnold. I'll help you through, whatever it is, old comrade."

"Will you? will you?" cried out Blennerhasset. "Oh, Tom, it's only that I don't want you and Daisy to despise me—to hate me. It's only for you two I care."

"And who says we are going to do that?" cried out Wymer, valiantly. "I should like to know who is to do that—to make us hate you? You Arnold Blennerhasset—the man who has been my firm friend all my life through! Why, it's almost as close a tie as that between husband and wife, such real old comrades as we have been. Ha, ha! hate you—despise you! Well, that's comical! I say,

Blennerhasset, what's come over you to credit such folly?"

But Blennerhasset still looked at him with wistful eyes, and his voice wavered and quivered.

"Tom—Tom, you mustn't think it is a light thing. I tell you I've done wrong—fearfully wrong—though I never meant it to turn out so. Heaven knows that."

"Pooh! I s'pose I can guess at it. It's some folly of your wild days. I never should have thought of it of you, seeing as you have been so tender with women, as if they weren't much short of angels right out of the clouds. But bless your heart, Arnold, everybody has sown some wild oats; and do you think, though all the rest of the world turns and holds up a pointing finger, Tom Wymer is going to back out of his friendship? Nay, nay, man! We've grown into such a love for each other, there's no untwining the heartstrings laced in and laced out by many hard experiences, and many bright ones, too. Heaven be thanked!"

Blennerhasset's rugged face overflowed with the mingled anguish and rapture of his emotion. He turned and flung his arms around the other, sobbing through hot tears:

"Oh, Tom! oh Tom!" and could get no farther.

Wymer patted the sunburnt cheek and smoothed out the iron-gray locks as he might have done to a child.

"Poor old fellow! You've worked yourself up into a real fever. It's a pity you hadn't freed your mind before this," he murmured, in a tender, caressing tone.

"Heaven bless you, Tom Wymer!" ejaculated Blennerhasset again, solemnly.

"Heaven has," returned Wymer, casting a reverent glance upward, "and very richly, in giving me you for my true and honest friend. I tell you, Arnold, there isn't anything can part us two."

"Heaven send it to be so," was the response, in a low, deep tone, no longer tremulous; "but it will only be of your goodness, Tom."

"Nonsense! which has done the most? Who has worked like a slave for his money, and then given it up to help me in my needs? Who has brought my Daisy to me, and helped me care for her, and done as much for her as if it was his own flesh and blood instead of mine? Do you think we are going to forget that?"

Blennerhasset writhed at Daisy's name.

"I'm thinking of the old times," he said; "let us talk about them—when we were lusty young fellows, and soldier comrades. We were a deal to each other even then—eh, Tom?"

"Of course we were, and have been ever since, and are now, Arnold. So cheer up, old boy; and what's more—speaking reverent-like of those things we are none of us sure of—so I think we shall be in the hereafter."

The two men grasped hands, and looked a moment fondly each into the other's face with loving, honest eyes.

"The hereafter," repeated Wymer, dreamily; "do you know that has been a good deal in my thoughts to-day? The fact is, I had a wonderful dream just before break of day. I'd been half asleep and half awake, you know, lying there listening to the birds waking up. I'd been dreaming about the sea. Maybe it was our island experience, and maybe not. Only I heard the great waves beating and rolling in like as they came from a long stretch without any break of land; and somehow it seemed dreadfully solemn, and a great awe fell upon me, and I shivered and looked around for you and Daisy, and could not find you, and was so distracted I cried out. And then suddenly the waves rolled away, and three angels, bright and glorious, you know, and yet sweetly familiar too, for all their starry eyes and waving wings, came floating up to me and kissed me. I seemed to know them, and to be joyful and glad again. One was my wife and the other my daughter, poor Bessie, all her troubles forgotten; but the third, the little cherub creature, has puzzled me all day."

He paused to look in his companion's face with that tranquil, confiding smile of his.

Blennerhasset's eyes were dilated with some mysterious awe.

"Good Heaven!" ejaculated he, feebly.

"Why, it was only a dream. You don't suppose I'm silly enough to take it as a warning," said Wymer, reprovingly. "But what am I turning away from your troubles for? You are going to tell it out now, and let me help you drive it off."

"Not yet, not yet," answered Blennerhasset, falling into a new panic; "not quite yet, Tom. Promise me again you won't be too hard with me. You'll try to see that I meant for the best. Promise me that, Tom."

And haven't I said it a dozen times? I tell you I don't care what it is—how bad. It won't change my heart to you. You're Arnold Blennerhasset and I'm Tom Wymer, and that meant Damon and Pythias in that old regiment—don't you remember? And it means just the same now.

"Heaven bless you, Tom. Heaven bless you!"

"And you'll free your mind now? You won't be carrying about a dreary secret away from us all?" pursued Wymer, eagerly.

"No, I won't; I will tell you all to-night," answered Blennerhasset, his tone solemn, his eyes up again to the sky.

"Well, that's a sensible resolution, and it will suit as well. I believe I'm tired, now I come to think of it. I walked too fast when I went over, I fear. I had a queer, faintish turn in a shop. I'm glad we are so near home."

When they went into the yard, they met Daisy and Algoner setting out for a walk, as they said.

Too much absorbed with their own experience were both grandfather and uncle to heed the traces of evident excitement upon the young people's faces.

Daisy had gone out, however, through the gate, when she suddenly turned, and came flying back, and throwing her arms around Wymer's neck, she murmured in an agitated voice:

"Kiss me, grandpapa, kiss me, and wish me good speed. I can't go without that."

He put back the glossy strands of wavy hair from the white forehead, and kissed it thrice.

"Heaven bless you, my darling, now and always. You cannot go anywhere, my pet, without grandfather's blessing follows. Take good care of her, captain."

And Daisy, with parting, half-reluctant hands, finally turned and followed Algoner.

"Bless her sweet face, her loving heart," murmured Wymer, following the graceful figure with fond eyes. "Well, well, Arnold, we've been two happy old fellows, after all!"

"You have promised you won't hate me," quoth Blennerhasset, half-despondent again.

"Tut, tut, man, why do you harp on that foolish thought? I tell you you've been almost as much of a comfort as Daisy herself, and it must needs be something beyond you to turn my love into hate. I'm going under the tree to take a little nap in my chair there. Come down there, when I wake up, and make a clean breast of it, and you'll see that there isn't room for anything but love in Tom Wymer's heart. I am a happy old fellow, and I know it, you see."

He turned around with the same genial, benignant smile shining over his whole face, and sauntered down to his favourite spot under the wide-spreading boughs of the chestnut tree, and drooped into the comfortable arm chair which was left always for his use, with a sigh of satisfaction.

He took out his handkerchief, wiped his face slowly, and looked around with a contented eye.

"I've drifted into a comfortable harbour at last," he murmured, "and I'm grateful I am sure. I never felt more thankfully contented in my life. And now Blennerhasset is going to put away his trouble, I shan't have any worry at all." His eye, that had been roaming lovingly from the flower-wreathed porch and embowering shrubbery, went upward to the clear blue sky with serene content.

Perhaps his morning dream returned to his mind, for the gaze was prolonged, and was reluctantly withdrawn. The bees came humming drowsily over the clover blossoms at his feet. A great butterfly with lovely wings fluttered around him slowly, and was greeted with a smile of childlike admiration, and its course followed with loving interest. Then a bird lighted on a lower branch of the tree, where he could watch its fairy movements; pecked at its glossy breast; fluttered its slender wings; twisted its tiny neck, and looked down a moment with sky-bright eyes before launching out into the swell of melody that filled all the place with harmony.

Seeing and listening in sweet content the old musician finally drowsed off into slumber, the sweet fragrance of the summer blossoming in the air, the mellowed sunlight filtering through the leafy screen and touching his bowed head reverently, the birds carolling madly all around him. So he glided away from the consciousness of earthly affairs, and floated off—off.

Did the angels come again in his vision, and clasp him close, and leave their tender kisses that so sweet a smile was left upon those breathless lips? Twice in the two hours that followed Blennerhasset, with haggard face and wistful eyes, stole down the path, glanced at the apparently sleeping figure, and noiselessly retreated, murmuring:

"I won't wake him out of a happy sleep to tell such a story."

But the third time Daisy had returned, and ran down with him, and stealing up to him, wreathed her arms about him, and dropped her kisses upon his forehead.

She sprang back with a wild cry. The forehead was marbly cold.

"Grandfather. Oh, grandfather!" she cried, wildly, kneeling down, and seizing upon the dropping hands.

Blennerhasset rushed forward and took a single look into the pale face, and staggered back into a moan of anguish.



[A FRESH CLAIMANT.]

Daisy ran back to the house like one demented, and seizing Algeron by the hand, implored:

"Oh, Captain Vansittant—Algeron, come and tell me my grandfather is not dead! He is sitting there under the tree, but he does not open his eyes nor speak a word of answer, and he is cold—so icy cold."

When they reached the place they found Blennerhasset kneeling there, with both icy hands of his old comrade clasped tight in his.

"Tom, Tom!" he muttered, "you know it now. You know it all now. And the third angel has told you who she is!"

"He is not dead. Oh! uncle don't say he is dead," implored the distracted Daisy, while Algeron lifted the hand, and explored for the pulse, dropping it sorrowfully the next instant.

"Dearest Daisy," he said, tenderly, "try to control your grief. See how peacefully and pleasantly his summons came. There could hardly have been a single pang to disturb that sweet smile. We will have a physician, but it is of no avail. Dear, dear, Daisy, he is surely gone."

The girl flung herself into the dead arms with a passionate burst of weeping.

Alas! alas! when before had those arms remained unresponsive to need of hers?

Blennerhasset watched her with dry, calm eyes.

Strangely calm Daisy thought, for she turned to him, and said, almost reproachfully:

"Oh! uncle, how can you bear it so!"

"Daisy," responded he, quickly, his lips twitching nervously, "do you think I do not know all the joy of my life is over! There is nothing left for me but to be patient as I can till I follow on my old comrade's track. And yet I could almost kneel down here, and bless Heaven for this mercy. He has been spared a cruel blow that would have killed him by its pain and sore distress. Now he has gone peacefully and lovingly. Oh, Tom Wymer, Tom Wymer, my old comrade!"

And here the husky voice broke off suddenly, and Blennerhasset buried his quivering face in his clasped hands.

"Go back to the house, dear Daisy," said Algeron, tenderly. "We will bring him in, and put him on his own bed."

"Not yet," exclaimed Blennerhasset, authoritatively. "Wait a moment, Daisy. I promised him it should be told to-day, and it shall be done. Sit down again at his feet, all of us in the old group, for the last time, and let me tell the story."

After a single glance at his solemn face the pair obeyed, instinctively aware that some important revelation was at hand.

Blennerhasset stood upright, in front of the

corpse, his arms crossed, his eyes never turned from the dead face. He began first with the conversation of that day, and then went back to the eventful scene at the Liverpool dock so many years ago. The dry gasps between the words, the rigid look about the white lips, betrayed that the speaker suffered as keenly as they, but he kept a calm composure of manner through it all.

Daisy at first had looked restless and distressed to be sitting there instead of attending to the last duties. But after a few sentences, she caught a sharply-drawn breath, clasped her hands tightly, and sat like a statue of stone, staring with breathless intensity of attention into the speaker's face, though his eyes never once saw hers. A little moan broke from her presently, but after it she never moved or spoke until he had finished.

He turned then slowly, and trusted himself to look at her. Her face was almost as deadly pale as that of the corpse, her eyes glittered fiercely, the tears all dried away.

"And now, Daisy, what will you say to me?" he asked, huskily. "Tom has forgiven me, I know. But you, Daisy?"

How full of yearning tenderness was that quivering voice. It touched her sorely, but, oh! her own heart was so cruelly stung with anguish and dismay. She could only think of that.

"I will try, uncle," she faltered. "I will try to forgive you. But you must give me time, for this is bitter, bitter sorrow to me."

A patient smile just quivered an instant over his face.

"Daisy, my darling, I will give you to the last minute of my life, and then bless you for your gracious goodness, if you whisper to my failing ear, Uncle, I forgive you! Oh, my child, don't you see that I never dreamed of any such sore ending as this? If that woman had never come."

Daisy gave a sharp cry.

"That woman! Will she have a right to claim me? Oh, who am I? What will become of me?"

"No one shall claim you," exclaimed Algeron, hastily, gathering the wavering little figure tenderly to his breast. "There is one claim that can supersede all others. Give it to me, Daisy, my darling. You know I have loved you from the first minute I heard your voice on the India steamer. I told you this morning there was one clause in the general's directions that could never be fulfilled, though the belt and papers were given safely into my possession. It was my marriage with a Blennerhasset heiress. And the reason was that I knew it would perjure my soul to take any one else to my heart but the sweet princess who reigned there in sovereign majesty. Dear Daisy, give me a

husband's right to care for you and to shield you."

And Daisy, sobbing more softly now, did not deny his claim upon her. He carried her tenderly to the house and set the startled little handmaid to attending her wants, and went out himself to help Blennerhasset.

The latter was grave, but calm and very still. Only half of him seemed left, and Algeron grieved to perceive that most of the time he did not understand a word spoken to him.

"Uncle," he said, gently, when they had laid the still figure in the familiar room and crossed the pale hands over the pulseless breast with a knot of flowers between the thin fingers, "dear uncle, it is natural that Daisy's grief and this harrowing and sudden revelation should numb her faculties and make her for a little time forgetful of your love. Give her time and she will come voluntarily, sobbing her forgiveness and asking for yours. Don't feel hurt and grieved that she stays by herself."

"Bless your kind heart, lad, I ain't blaming Daisy. I shouldn't blame her, whatever she said," he answered, giving a little start when first addressed. "And I'm thankful she found you to care for her and make her happy, as I couldn't. I, who am in a kind of maze, you see, and weak and confused. It's so long, you know, that Tom and I have been together and helped one another that I feel lost, knowing, as I do, that he has gone away from me—so far away. Once if he couldn't talk he would write, though it was seldom that we got so far apart as that, even. But now—"

He stopped and looked wistfully down at the marble face, and then suddenly turned his appealing eyes upon the young man.

"You don't think there is any way, do you, that he could let me know? It seems to me this hard, tight feeling would leave my heart if I could just have the word that he forgives me and cares a little something for poor Blennerhasset still. For he's with those angels now. I told you his dream."

Algeron was deeply affected. How strong indeed was the bond between the two. But he was spared the effort at reply.

Blennerhasset suddenly lifted his head and smiled brightly.

"What a silly creature I am! Didn't he leave me the last words just as if Heaven inspired him to say it? He said 'There wasn't room for anything but love in Tom Wymer's heart,' and I am not going to doubt it—no. I'm not going to doubt it. And if he can't come back, I shall go on to him."

Algeron wrung his hand and left him there, still hanging fondly over the lifeless form.

(To be continued.)



[AN IMPERIOUS ORDER.]

LOVE'S DREAM AND REALITY; OR, THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

CHAPTER XIII.

A woman moved is like a fountain troubled
Muddy ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty.
Shakespeare.

In her dressing-room at home Myra Halstead was walking to and fro in a state bordering on frenzy. She tore the ornaments from her hair, her neck and arms, and flung them upon the table. She threw off her beautiful dress, and spoke angrily to the maid when she offered to brush out and braid her hair for the night. She indulged in outbreaks of passion, then she sobbed and cried, then she walked the floor again.

Finally she threw herself, exhausted, in an easy-chair, as if undecided whether to go into another fit of hysterics, or to allow herself to become calm.

The maid's expressions of sympathetic indignation had not the least effect.

"Hold your tongue, Sylvia," she said at length, "and attend to me. Where is the box the traitor sent on Thursday?"

Sylvia opened an Indian cabinet, and took out a tiny box of polished wood, richly inlaid in different colours. It had a key in the lock, which she turned and opened the lid.

The inside was lined with crimson silk velvet, on which reposed a gold locket, finished with a circlet of small pearls and diamonds.

She laid this on the lap of her young mistress.

Myra lifted the jewel, and unfolded a bit of white paper that lay under it. It seemed to increase her vexation.

She thrust the paper and locket back into the box, locked it, and bade her maid wrap it in paper and seal it up.

"You know the address, Sylvia?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Myra, it is here; I copied it off the paper, as you told me."

"You shall take the box and leave it there to-morrow morning," said the young lady. "Give me pen and ink; I will direct it. Now it is ready. Put it on the table, and before I wake to-morrow let it be there—you know. You must take it yourself."

"I will, Miss Myra."

"How daring of him to flirt with that woman before my very eyes!"

"He is not worth thinking about, you that have so many beaux, and all rich, too!"

"You may undress me now, Sylvia; it is late."

The night toilet was speedily made. Before she composed herself to sleep Myra called out:

"Don't forget to go early in the morning, Sylvia, and don't tell any one about it!"

"No, miss."

"How I should like to see him when he knows I have discarded him; I hate him—I do; Ray is ten times as handsome!"

Notwithstanding her anger, the fair girl slept late into the morning. When she opened her eyes Sylvia was moving quietly about the room.

The maid turned at the first sound of her young lady's voice, and commenced a series of mysterious nods to indicate that her orders had been executed.

"Did you see any one?" asked Myra, sitting up in bed.

"No, miss; no one at all."

"How did you send it to him?"

"I gave it to the waiter; he will be sure to put it in his hands."

"I am very glad!" cried the girl, leaping from her bed to the floor. "I will never forgive him, never! The treacherous flirt! Ugh, how cold it is! Dress me quickly, Sylvia. Don't pull my hair as you do sometimes, or I shall scold you, for I am in an irritable mood to-day. Throw that shawl over my shoulders."

Sylvia obeyed in silence.

"Is breakfast over?" she asked, seeing a tray of the delicate toast, eggs, and chocolate on her own table.

"Oh, long ago, Miss Myra. I brought this up for you. See, the chocolate is boiling hot; the spirit lamp is burning under it. Will you have some?"

Myra threw herself on an easy-chair, in her dressing-gown, and took a cup of the delicious beverage, which she sipped while eating heartily. It was not in a love disappointment to spoil the young lady's appetite.

She descended to the common breakfast parlour when she was dressed. Her father had gone out.

The only occupant of the room was Mrs. Singleton, who had accepted the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Halstead to take up her abode with them for the winter. She was doing some crochet work by the window; but laid it down when the young girl entered, and advancing, took her hand and kissed her with an air of solemnity, suggestive of something out of the common order of things.

"Are you not well?" asked the girl.

"Oh, yes. Why do you ask?"

"Because you look so grave and almost sad. Has anything happened?"

"Something I do not like; but it may please some others in this house."

"What is it?"

"Shall I show it to you? Perhaps it will disturb you as much as it has me; and you are looking pale, my child."

"Never mind my looks! What is it?"

The gaunt lady took Myra's hand and led her out of the room and upstairs to the back drawing-room. There she drew the curtain from one of the windows, and pointed to something on the wall.

It was a fine full-length portrait of Clarice Halstead in her wedding-dress. Myra started to see what a likeness it was, as well as a superb painting. The drapery was exquisitely done; the rich sheen of the silk, the misty softness of the lace, the cloud-like veil, the snowy wreath, were perfect. The same justice had been done to the matchless form and face, the glossy hair, the smooth clear cheek, the dreamy, dusky eyes. One white hand, holding a bouquet, was painted as only a true artist could depict that most difficult piece of work—a lady's hand.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the girl. "When did this come home?"

"Yesterday. Did you know it had been ordered?"

"Oh, yes; an artist of considerable repute was engaged to paint it a month ago. Did you ever see such a likeness?"

"Myra!" said Mrs. Singleton, fixing a stern look on her, "surely you gave no orders to have this picture hung in this room?"

"No—I knew nothing about it."

"You cannot have forgotten, child, whose portrait has hung—yes—in that very spot for so many years?"

"No, I remember well; it was my mother's."

"Now it is removed, thrown aside—to make way for the new queen!" exclaimed the dame, in indignation.

"Mrs. Singleton!"

"And look, Myra, almost the same costume—white silk and lace! The proud new wife must set forth her fresh young beauty in contrast to the worn plainer face of your mother."

The girl looked wonderingly into the matron's face.

"Can you bear it, girl? To see your own beloved mother supplanted—and not only supplanted, but openly triumphed over! If your father had no more respect for the memory of the dead, I wonder that you can suffer this desecration!"

Myra's nerves were in an excited state from her paroxysm of jealousy.

"I will not suffer it!" she cried, impetuously. "See, she holds just such a bouquet as mamma has in her picture! I will have it taken down at once."

She rang the bell with energy. The servant man presented himself.

"John," said his young mistress, "you may call Henry to help you take down this picture."

The man was agape with astonishment.

"Why, Miss Myra, master hung it up yesterday."

"I don't care who put it here; I choose to have it taken down, and my mother's restored to its place. Let it be done directly."

"You are not to dispute the orders of your young mistress," said Mrs. Singleton.

The man went to call his fellow servant.

Mrs. Singleton fortified Myra's resolution by her expressions of indignation.

All her jealous dislike of Halstead's bride bubbled forth.

"It was not enough," she cried, "to usurp the place of that lovely woman in your father's heart, but she must want her triumph and degrade the semblance of her predecessor before the eyes of all the household."

"Say no more, aunt!" said Myra, who was pacing the room in her agitation. "Leave it all to me. Now go to work," she said to the two men, who entered, one of them carrying the steps.

In a few minutes the picture stood on the floor.

"Now, bring back the one that hung here. Where is it?"

"In master's bedchamber."

"Go and fetch it. Stay, you may take this with you."

The man obediently took up the large portrait. At that moment the door leading to the hall was opened, and Mrs. Halstead entered.

An atmosphere of peace seemed to enter with her; but her stepdaughter was excited beyond the bounds of self-control.

"What is all this? What are you doing?" she said to the men.

Myra answered, "They are obeying my orders, madame. I have directed them to restore my mother's picture to its place. It was presumptuous in you to remove it, and put yours where it had hung so long. My mother is dead, but her memory is entitled at least to respect!"

She burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"To respect? Certainly. And I am the last one to refuse to yield it, as you would acknowledge, Myra, if you knew me. It was by your father's orders that my portrait was put up in this room."

"Oh, yes, I daresay! You have bewitched him, and caused him to neglect every one else!" cried the excited girl; "and no doubt you wished to show everybody how much handsomer and more brilliant you are than my poor mother! And to set off the contrast, you had yourself painted in the same dress, with the same bouquet!" The words were half-drowned in tears, but it could be seen they came from a sorely wounded heart.

"Myra, darling," said Mrs. Singleton, clasping the girl in her arms, "you must not allow yourself to become excited."

It was easy for one of Clarice's penetration to discover whose insinuations had excited her stepdaughter.

The men had paused, looking to their mistress for directions.

"Go on," she said, "and do as Miss Myra directed you."

They went out, and presently returned with the other picture, which they hung upon the wall in place of the one taken down.

Mrs. Halstead quietly superintended all and adjusted the cord with her own hands. Her dignity and forbearance did more to humiliate Mrs. Singleton than any words could have done. Her thin face worked; she fairly blushed with mortification.

She led Myra gently out of the room, and upstairs to her own chamber. There she seated herself beside her on the sofa, and soothed her with caresses.

Myra's mood had changed, and she felt ashamed of her violence.

"It was good of her, was it not," she whispered, "to give up to me after all?"

"She wished you to think her good in doing so," was the reply.

"What do you mean, aunt?"

"That you are no match for her in cunning, my poor child."

"I don't think she is cunning."

"She wants to subjugate you, dear, but I hope you will retain your independence."

"I am sorry I spoke so rudely to her."

"It was but the truth."

"I am sure she meant no disrespect to my mother's memory."

"You cannot fathom her depth of character."

"Oh, aunt, now you misjudge her. Miss Kent was always open and frank with me, and always good-tempered too. If my father does not scold me I will ask her to forgive me!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Oh! mischief! thou art swift
To enter in the thoughts of desperate men.

Shakespeare.

MARTIN BLAKE was seated in his dressing-gown with a cigar, reading over a letter he had taken from his trunk. He had conned it carefully and laid it down, musing over its contents, when a tap came to his door.

"Come in!" he called out, "Fred Hobart, if it is you!"

"No one else," answered that worthy, as he entered, closing the door, and took a seat on the other side of the table. "You have not been out this morning, I see," he remarked, glancing at the remains of breakfast upon a tray on the side-table.

"Out late last night," half-groaned Blake, laying aside his cigar. "And my usual luck followed me at Rippedale—always does of late. I'm cleaned out, Hobart."

"Sorry enough to hear it," said the young man, casting his glance at his watch. "I wanted you to lead me a hundred or so."

"Couldn't do it! Don't expect to see so much money in a month," ejaculated the other. "How come you to want so much? You never play, I believe!"

"No—but I must live, you know, and I should like to settle a few bills. Can't you let me have fifty pounds?"

"I tell you I haven't three to my name," and he drew out a nearly empty purse, shaking it between his fingers. Then he took up the letter he had been studying and folded it.

"What's that? A dunn?"

"No; something worse. Fred, you have studied law, I believe?"

"I did a smattering at the business, but it did not agree with me."

"I suppose not. Perhaps, though, you can tell me what my claim is worth on the late Mr. Edgerly's estate."

"As I understand it, you have no claim. He disinherited you."

"He left all he had to that son of his, who was too well off before with his mother's property."

"There was a former will in your favour."

"Giving me half. But he destroyed it."

"You might get the fellow who benefited by the last one to act on the square. He is rolling in money they say."

"I don't think he'll do anything. Newbold has written to him and got nothing."

"You might shame him into it."

"No; here is his father's last letter to me. You can read it."

Hobart glanced over the letter.

"He forbids you to apply to your cousin, or to approach him in any way, on penalty of exposure and punishment, and says Colonel Atherton will see to it, as he is intrusted with the secret. What secret?"

"I was in a desperate strait for money, and I was imprudent. If I could have got the old man and his son out of the way then, I should have come in for the whole."

"You did not go the right way to work, I see. The old man discovered your design—"

"In six hours. But for that unlucky discovery I should have been a rich man."

"And this Colonel Atherton?"

"He had an old grudge against me. When I was a boy I spent months at a time in his family."

"You?"

"Yes; he was living not far from Mr Edgerly. He had a very handsome woman for a wife, who wanted me for her page, and gave me dancing and fencing lessons."

"Fencing?"

"Yes, she handed the weapon skillfully, though she was a slender woman. And she rode like a streak of lightning. She made me ride with her and read to her; and I verily believe I should have fallen in love with her if I had been old enough. I read romances to her so often that I used to fancy myself one of the heroes, and conquering fortune by some mighty deed. Oh, the jewels she had! And she used to tell me that when I married my wife should wear such. She used to put them on, and bid me look at her, fairly blazing with the gems. And one day I asked her if her husband were dead if she would not marry me."

"Then you loved her, after all?"

"Not a bit of it; but I wanted the jewels, and I wanted her to entertain and teach me. I had read of poisons and all that, and one day I mixed up one

in some wine on the sideboard in a decanter nearly empty."

"What was done, then?"

"She charged me with poisoning the wine, and I did not deny it. The house was closed to me from that time."

"Did you make confession?"

"I did to her. She knew what I had done, in fact; but she showed me no mercy. Her husband would not believe but that she had put me up to it. I was so angry at her reproaches, I told her she had given me the idea, and had fostered my hopes that she would marry me if I could make her a widow."

"What said she to that?"

"She spurned me from her presence; said I had ruined her life—and I never saw her again. It is my firm belief that she was in love with an officer; and I expected to hear she had eloped with him when she left her husband."

"They parted, then?"

"In a few weeks—yes. I never heard that she had run away with a lover; but that was always my belief."

"And this man knows of your attempt on your uncle and cousin?"

"It was partly through his caution that the attempt was defeated. I was afraid of him, but I was tired of dependence; I could not have stood it till the old man's death. I was bound to break the chain."

"Well," said young Hobart, "I am lawyer enough to tell you that you cannot force your cousin to give you anything if his father cuts you off in his will, nor frighten him into it by threats, as long as he and this colonel can bring up these stories. Better trust to the cards."

"There I am out again. The knaves suspect my tricks. I have been refused a place at the tables in several houses."

"That is precious bad, for I counted on you, Blake, to give me a lift. The little jade yonder has thrown me over."

"What! Halstead's daughter. What's the matter?"

"Jealous—jealous of my attentions to Aurelia Wetmore."

"But you have her—"

"Uncertain as the wind. Fire and fervour one minute—the next. If I had hooked Aurelia I would let the little vixen go; she has not half the widow's money, and ten chances to one her father has an heir in his old age. But if I fall with the lovely widow, I shall have to marry the other in spite of my hope of revenge on her father."

"She is a pretty little thing."

"I never liked her gipsy ways. Now Aurelia pleases me."

"Have you proposed yet?"

"To the widow? No; she keeps me in such a flutter of doubt, I dare not venture."

"You must do something, Fred, and I too. We are both at the point of desperation."

"I shall make up with Myra, and push my sail with Aurelia at the same time."

"Couldn't you borrow a few hundreds in the meantime?"

"Of either lady-love? You must be crazy, Blake!"

"Of young Singleton, then?"

"He hates me. No, no! I must live on my wits till I get one heiress or the other. I've an idea, Blake."

"Let us have it, quick, if there's money in it."

"That enchantress—the French madame—something may be done with her."

"I don't think she's over deep in funds, or I should have tried it."

"But you could take charge of the purse, man, and go staring with her."

"You don't know my lady Florence. She would refuse to sing a note."

"You know the old adage—'The bird that can sing and won't,' etc."

"I should not know how to make her do anything she did not choose to do."

"Try another tack, then. Nobody knows of her relation to you?"

"Nobody—I believe."

"I thought so. Young Edgerly would not be so sweet on her if he knew—"

"Young Edgerly! What do you mean?"

"Is it possible you do not know that he visits her almost every day?"

"Impossible!"

"True!"

"And with what purpose?"

"He is in love with her—any idiot might see that."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Blake, starting to his feet. "The old colonel encourages him; at least, he introduced him, and invited him to drive with them once or twice."

"Are you sure of this, Fred?"

"I have seen them with my own eyes, and they don't want magnifiers."

"By Jove! I won't stand this! She wouldn't see me!"

"Come, don't give way to passion, man. You can make something out of all this. Let things go on till both parties are a little more in for it; then come down on them. They will be glad to save their characters by a little money; and you owe me an equal share for my information."

Blake was walking to and fro in excitement. He tore off his dressing-gown and seized his coat and boots.

"What are you doing?" asked Hobart.

"I have made up my mind now. I will take Florence back and carry her away from here."

"Cool, cool and cautious, my good fellow. Too great haste will spoil everything. Trust to me. I want your help in my little affair, and you shall have mine. You must not be rash."

"I tell you I'll not bear it! Herobbed me of my fortune, and now he would—"

"No, he wouldn't! Rupert Edgerly is too cunning to run into a trap with his eyes open. Wait till he is caught, and then you have him. Come, listen to me. You know she appears at the opera to-night. You shall go with me, and if you keep your temper and patience, you shall see her. I shall get a chance to make an appointment with the little vixen who is so bitter against me, and make all right with her. But caution is necessary. Neither you nor I can afford to fail, you know."

"You are right, Fred! But I must get out of the house, the close air suffocates me!"

"All right; you shall launch with me. We will mature our plans then."

CHAPTER XV.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?

Milton.

MADAME BRENTANO'S debut at the opera was entirely successful. The house was filled with the elite of society; and all the connoisseurs pronounced her voice one of the purest quality.

The fire and force of her nature appeared in her natural acting, and many spontaneous bursts of applause attested the heartfelt sympathy of the spectators.

Mrs. Halstead did not go out that evening, and her husband was occupied writing letters in his study.

Myra was taken by Mrs. Singleton, attended by two gentlemen, and the party occupied a private box near the stage.

The young belle was extremely gay, and looked exquisitely beautiful in a silk dress of light-green, with opera cloak bordered with ermine, and a coquetish head-dress of lace and pearls.

The box was continually thronged by gentlemen who came in to pay their respects to the elder lady, and their admiring homage to the young one.

Once or twice Myra took a sweeping survey of the house, as if half expecting to see her cast-off lover. But she could see nothing of him.

She had not observed, as they passed through the lobby, that a pair of keen eyes watched her from behind a pillar, and that she had been followed to the very door of the box.

Just at the close of one fine scene, when the prima donna had retired amid a shower of bouquets, and the box door was open to give ingress to several gallants eager to greet the young lady, Myra felt a paper thrust into her hand, and the hand pressed unmistakably.

She turned quickly, just in time to see a manly figure gliding through the crowd and escaping into the corridor.

A flood of crimson surged into her fair face, suffusing even her forehead, and a shudder ran through her frame.

"Who was that, Myra," said Mrs. Singleton, "in such a hurry to get out?"

The young girl shook her head, but did not trust herself to answer. She clutched firmly to the paper she held, and finally slipped it into her pocket.

The buzz of conversation and the many compliments she heard sounded like far-off noises in her ears—like the wearying sweep of the wind, or a distant waterfall.

When the music recommenced, and those around her were silent, she drew out the paper, and cautiously unfolded it behind her fan.

It was a passionate rhapsody from a lover, who professed to be driven to despair by her coldness and cruelty.

Such expressions of love and misery, such beseeching language she had never read before.

The heat of the house was oppressive; but in an impulse of displeasure at the boldness of the young man, whose handwriting she well knew, Miss Hal-

stead gathered her cloak more closely about her shoulders, and fastened it at her throat.

Then she looked out with scorn and displeasure in her looks.

How bold it was in him to watch her and endeavour to communicate with her after she had signified her rejection of his advances!

Yet she held fast the note, and holding up her fan as a screen, put it carefully in her bosom. After all, she was not in the least angry.

From a box nearly opposite, Colonel Atherton and his young friend Rupert enjoyed the performance.

The latter drank in the rich sweetness of the fair vocalist's tones as he never had music before. The rapid changes in his expressive face were not unnoticed by his companion.

Both had been invited to sup at Mrs. Miniver's after the opera, and expected to meet the enchantress.

The colonel could not fail to perceive that the young man was fast becoming deeply enamoured of the singer. For this he felt himself in great measure responsible; for it had been at his solicitation that he had gone to the concert. How would this end? He fell into a fit of musing.

The happiness of young Edgerly was dear to him as that of a son. How would it be if he were led on to unite his fate with that of a professional actress? Could there be domestic comfort in such a union?

The thought troubled him. He made a resolution that after this evening he would yield to no more entreaties to accompany his young friend on visits to the singer. He blamed himself already.

He glanced again at the rapt, glowing countenance of the young man, all eager delight; then at the object of his admiration, standing in a graceful pose at the conclusion of a solo, and bowing to the applause.

There was a fascination about her he could not resist.

It thrilled through every fibre of his being. And the strangely familiar looks! They could not be traced to cast of feature, or to any particular expression. It was as if he had seen the face in his dreams, or so long ago that the memory had almost faded away. He strove in vain to catch the fleeting impression.

As she lifted her radiant eyes and smiled his heart gave a great bound, and an impulse prompted him to rush forward and clasp the lovely vision that brought his youth back so vividly.

Then a cloud of sorrow and despair seemed to fall between them, and he sank back, groaning inwardly.

"What can all this mean?" he muttered to himself. "Am I, too, falling under the spell of witchcraft? Is it in me to play the fool in my old age?"

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and turned his eyes away, no longer wondering at young Edgerly's infatuation.

His looks swept the audience to find some object to divert his attention.

He noticed a man in a private box on the other side, holding the curtain so as partly to conceal his face, and flitting intently towards the stage. The singular fluttering of the curtain attracted his attention.

"Was the listener nervous and trembling?"

As the drapery fell aside a moment he saw that the man's eyes, eager, wild and ferocious, lighted a face of deathlike pallor. He looked like one ready to commit any deed of desperation.

Some one behind him leaned forward and whispered, and then the curtain was drawn close as the act-drop fell on the stage.

The wild-looking man was Martin Blake.

He had seen the triumph of the woman he had despised and forsaken; he had seen her whom he had trampled on receiving the homage of crowds as the unrivalled queen of song; he had gazed on her matured loveliness; and cursed his own folly in giving her up; he had felt madness surging within him as he saw her smile, and remembered that he was her rightful master.

And he would be so still! He would claim her.

The law gave him privileges she would not dare dispute. He would reap the harvest of her success. He had noted the eloquent looks of his envied cousin. He would tear the siren from his grasp. He would be revenged on him! The demon within him rejoiced that he had it in his power to be so revenged!

The opera was over. The audience was in brilliant procession out of the building.

Blake sat some minutes in a deep study; then sprang up and pressed forward like a madman towards the stage.

From one of the chairs in the orchestra he leaped upon the boards, lifted the curtain, and passed behind the scenes.

The persons engaged in putting out the lights pro-

bably took him for one of the actors, for no one intercepted him. He made his way to the rear entrance.

Several carriages were there. He inquired if Madame Brentano had driven away.

No; there was her carriage. The driver was on his seat; there was no footman.

He pulled the door open and sprang in. It was quite dark, and he concealed himself in the corner opposite the door that would be opened for the lady.

In a few minutes it was thrown open, and Madame Brentano, wrapped in her cloak, and attended by her maid, stepped in. She took the back seat.

The maid had entered and was placing herself on the other side, when she perceived that some one else was there.

She gave a loud scream and started up.

"What is the matter?" asked her mistress.

"There is some one here! A man!" shrieked the woman, and in an instant she had sprung from the carriage.

"Drive on!" shouted Blake, putting his head out, and speaking to the coachman.

Madame Brentano preserved her presence of mind.

"Who are you, sir?" she asked, in a firm voice, "and what do you mean by getting into my carriage?"

"Hush, and let him go on! I have something to say to you," was the answer.

The lady rose to follow the maid out, and was already at the door, when Blake seized her arm, and forcibly drew her back, closing the carriage door.

"Florence! I must and will speak to you."

"Oh, it is you!" she cried, in the tone of an injured queen. "It is like you! I might have expected some such thing. Begone, sir, or I will give you into custody."

"You have refused to receive me at your own house; and I am determined to have an interview. You had better silence that girl, and let the man go on."

The maid had not ceased her cries for assistance, and several persons were surrounding the carriage. The driver was restraining his horses with great difficulty.

"What is this?" cried many voices.

"You see, madam, what you are likely to bring upon yourself!" muttered the intruder. "Stop all this and let me go home with you! It is better to give up quietly than to make a police affair of it; and it shall be so, if this clamour continue longer. I will attend you home."

"I am not going home. I insist upon it that you leave my carriage, sir, or allow me to leave it."

"Out with him! Where is the villain?" cried the voices outside; while the door was pulled open violently, and more than one pair of arms assayed to seize the intruder.

The man burst into a torrent of fierce and bitter oaths.

"I'll not be baffled next time," he cried, hoarse with rage, as he stepped out of the carriage.

The lady leaned out and whispered to him:

"I will see you to-morrow."

Then, wrapping her cloak around her, she drew back into the corner, while a hue and cry outside told her that several persons were in pursuit of the offender.

In a few minutes the carriage drove on, and soon stopped at the gate of the courtyard enclosing Mrs. Miniver's house. There were terraces surrounding the upper lawn, with statuary and urns full of flowers growing.

Madame Brentano had to take her maid's arm and that of a gentleman on the other side to walk up, for she was faint with the disturbance she had undergone.

A whispered command to be silent held the voluble attendant from publishing what had passed.

When she reached the drawing-room, and was met by her cordial hostess, she looked so pale and seemed so agitated that Mrs. Miniver was seriously alarmed. She made her sit down on the sofa, removed her wrappings with her own hands, and offered a glass of wine.

With an effort the singer regained her composure, and smiled as she answered the friends who clustered around her. A select number had been invited to meet her and enjoy each other's society from half-past ten to twelve o'clock.

The company was soon seated at a tempting supper, and everything disagreeable was forgotten in the hilarity of the occasion.

Madame Brentano's reserve and usually quiet manner were attributed to fatigue from her professional exertions.

One in the company was not deceived, for he had heard from one of the gentlemen an account of the intrusion of some unknown ruffian into her carriage, her alarm and his forcible expulsion.

This anxious friend was Rupert Edgerly. He stood silent in the group around the star of the evening, all eager to congratulate her upon her success, and prophesy a career of fame and profit for her.

He did not even offer to wait on her at supper, nor did he join the light jokes and merriment, seasoned with wit, of the choice spirits who were expected to celebrate the evening. But after supper, when the lady was for a single moment left alone, the young man came to her, and offered her his arm for a stroll through the conservatory.

"The fresh air will do you good," he said.

With thanks and a sense of relief, Madame Brentano took his arm, and they were soon in the labyrinth of flowers.

Trailing fuchsias of glowing hues hung over them, and costly exotics sent up a fragrance almost overpowering to the senses. The atmosphere was full of oppressive sweetness.

"I cannot stay here," the lady said, faintly.

"Not here, but farther on, the end doors are open," pleaded Rupert; and taking a turn to the right they met the fresh breeze, cooled by the damps of night, in a more secluded part of the greenhouse.

There was a long seat of open ironwork beside a fountain playing into a basin, where aquatic plants spread their leaves starred with snowy flowers. To this resting-place he led his fair companion.

"Now you may rest," he said, drawing the fleecy shawl around her shoulders. "You have been agitated, and all this talk and glare of light has wearied you."

"I must go home," sighed the lady. "We had best not stop here. I feel better already, and quite able to walk."

"One moment—one word, dear Madame Brentano. I have been told that some ruffian attacked you as you left the opera house. He must be punished, if we can find him. Will you permit me to make the search? He must have had some object—"

"Oh, no, no!" cried the lady. "You must do nothing! I shall not be again molested."

"Who can tell? Your beauty, your unprotected situation—"

"I am not unprotected from him,"

"Then you know him?"

"I—I—have seen him before."

"And he pursues you, intent on plunder, perhaps. This must not be. Oh, dearest lady, pardon me, but I cannot refrain from entreating you to end it by permitting me to be your shield, your champion, your safeguard—"

Madame Brentano rose hastily, but she could not stem the tide that had burst its bounds already.

"Give me the title to stand between you and all who would disturb your peace."

He saw a violent shiver run through the frame of the fair creature whose hand he had seized; he saw her countenance change; her very lips blanched. She drew her hand away and turned to leave him.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed, in a tone of sad, hopeless anguish. "My love meets no response—no scorn. I love you with my whole soul; how have I deserved this contempt?"

She uttered a deep groan, and covered her face with her hands. Her heart beat so violently she could hardly stand without grasping the balustrade near her.

Rupert was wounded deeply. After a moment's pause, he said:

"At least I may hope that you will pardon my presumption?"

She lifted up her face, bathed in tears. What meant this strange emotion?

He snatched her hand again, and covered it with kisses.

"You do not despise me? Can you say that you do not love me?" he murmured.

She released herself from his embrace quickly.

"Mr. Edgerly," she cried, "I am your suppliant; I am in your power. Never speak such words to me again!"

"How are you in my power, if you do not care for me? Dearest, loveliest of women, will you be my wife?"

"No, no. It is impossible!"

"Why is it impossible?" he pleaded, with the passionate earnestness of a man who loves with his whole heart. "Listen to me; you are too lovely to remain thus unprotected; you do not regard me with indifference. Give up the stage; be the honoured mistress of a happy home; the wife of a man who adores you!"

She was making her way back even while he was speaking. He drew her close to his side as they reached the angle of the path. He felt her form tremble in his clasp. Then he whispered:

"My love is not unreturned!"

Suddenly she turned and faced him. The colour had come back to her cheeks; her eyes were flashing.

"Not one word more!" she said, in low, clear tones. "If you would not kill me never speak to me thus again! I cannot be your wife. A barrier, insurmountable as the heavens above, must separate us for ever! Leave me without question, and never see me again. I shall not stay here, and you must not follow me. Farewell!"

She walked swiftly on towards the house, leaving him incapable of uttering a word.

What could she mean by pronouncing the doom of separation, while so nearly betraying that she loved him? What was the terrible secret that divided them?

Her words had the power of determined purpose. There was nothing of feminine weakness or girlish shyness in the renunciation of him. She bade him leave her for ever, and forbade him to ask the reason why she had thus crushed his hope.

He stood a few minutes thus, then he hastened after her, but she had entered the drawing-room, and passed on with her hostess to the dressing-room. One of the first persons he encountered was Colonel Atherton.

"She has left us, Rupert," he said, taking his arm, "and the others are going. Come with me to find our carriage."

As they drove homeward, the colonel, after a long silence, took the young man's hand and pressed it warmly.

"I have seen how it was all along, my boy," he said. "You have my best wishes. Marry her; let her leave the stage, and let us go to Paris together."

Rupert made no reply, but his gloomy silence was eloquent.

"I thought it would be all settled when you went into the conservatory together," remarked his friend.

"I saw you, and saw it in your face."

"I told her that I loved her."

"And she—she was not so foolish as to reject such devotion! If so, I have greatly mistaken her."

"Say not one word against her! She did reject it, and I am the most miserable of men."

(To be continued).

ADRIEN LEROY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Maurice Durant," "Picole Fortune," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. JASPER VERMONT started at the old man's words and made as if he were about to wave him back, but his hand dropped to his side again with the suddenness of astonishment as Adrien Leroy's tall form towered behind the bent one of the old man, and the duke, with flashing eyes and compressed lips, took up his place beside him.

The baron looked from one to the other; Lady Constance raised her head then, stood motionless and pale as a statue.

Mr. Harker looked round with his keen eyes and seemed to read every face with a comprehensive glance, then, with a haughty, dry bow to the baron, he said:

"I am the Mr. Harker who has instituted these proceedings, my lord."

The baron opened his lips, but the old man, with a firm but respectful gesture, continued before he could speak:

"I hold the bond which your son is charged with forging; I, also, am the money-lender at whose suit this writ on your person and Barminster Castle has been issued. You may wish to know—your indignant scorn assures me that you will insist upon knowing—by what means I have become possessed of this power. My lord, I am here to give you the information."

With a dry cough he took from his breast a roll of papers and approached one of the small tables which stood on the terrace.

A breathless silence, broken only by the quick breathing of the baron, fell on all.

The old man, with slow precision, unfastened the roll, and looked round.

"Is Mr. Adrien Leroy here?" he asked.

"I am here," answered Adrien, coming forward and standing beside the table with grave composure.

"This matter concerns you most nearly, sir," the old man said. "I pray you give it your best attention."

Adrien inclined his head.

"I am listening," he said, raising his eyes to the old man's face sternly, then turning them to Roah with a sad but kind smile, where she stood by the old man's side looking on the ground with an absorbed gaze.

"Five years ago," said Mr. Harker, "my master—for I am only a servant, a machine, acting under instructions—my master commanded me to purchase all the bills bearing the signature of 'Adrien Leroy,' furthermore I received his instructions to lend

money in any amount to those who brought that same name as guarantee. I did so, and every bill and liability which you contracted either by your own or your father's name fell into the hands of the man I represent. This man, my master, was your friend, and by his matchless ingenuity and marvellous cunning he turned your friendship and confidence to such account that in a few months from the period of which I speak he had acquired the unlimited command of your immense revenue. All matters of business, every deed, legal instrument, even the tradesmen's bills, passed through his hands. So thoroughly did he gain your confidence that you trusted him to an extent unparalleled in the history of knaves and their dupes. That confidence he abused. To how great an extent I alone can prove, for I was his tool and slave, and held his secrets. Not a bill was paid without his receiving his commission and adding to its amount.

"He it was who lent the money to you and the friends who procured the use of your name, and he it was who, behind the screen which I supplied, gradually yet surely drew you and hundreds of others into his net. What object beside that of gain he had in view I know not, but it is certain that nothing but your ruin, in wealth and honour, would satisfy him, and accordingly I received instructions to set about a scheme for its consummation.

"Amongst other bills we held was one presumably endorsed by the Duc de Rouen. That signature was a forgery, a clever forgery in two senses of the word, for it imitated the duke's and your own handwriting."

Jasper Vermont, who had stood speechless with astonishment up to this moment, here sprang forward, but Mr. Harker looked towards the duke, who, scarcely waiting for such an intimation, quietly seized Mr. Vermont's arms and pinned him against the terrace.

Adrien Leroy, pale even to the lips, without taking his eyes from the old man's face, said, in a low, constrained voice:

"Go on."

"That double forgery was executed by my employer's hand, and I received instructions to charge you, Mr. Adrien Leroy, with the crime. The particular day fixed on by my master as that on which you were supposed to have perpetrated the fraud was one of which, for some reasons involving another person's honour, you could give no account. Your carriage was seen at the door of my office; I was prepared to swear that you received the money into your own hands, and on that day. Our evidence was complete, and your dishonour was so far accomplished; but at the forging of the last link in my master's chain of villainy there comes the flaw. The poor servile tool whom he had beneath the thumb, and trod under his feet, suddenly regained then the freedom he had bargained for on only a child's sake. The terms of that contract he—and he pointed his finger at the livid face of Jasper Vermont—"will for the sake of revenge, no doubt, speedily proclaim to the world. Their proclamation can have little pain for those whom it concerns, for we have plucked up courage to endure it manfully. My child and I, thank Heaven, are freed from the chains, and were it not so I could no longer see my soul drifting to perdition in this man's service. So much for the scheme of ruin and dishonour. One point yet remains for me to explain, and that is soon made clear. You will expect some proofs of my assertions. I give them to you. My lord, this child was found by my daughter and sheltered and succoured by her. She is a waif, and no one knows her history. That given by the man Wilfer may be false, and concocted for him by my master, whose accomplice, or rather tool he was. This much of it is true, that she fled from the man's brutality, was succoured by Mr. Leroy, and fled from his chambers and wandered about the streets until my daughter found her. Providence works in a mysterious way, and ordered that the plotter should fall foul of his own deep pits. This girl, on one of her wanderings one night, was pushed roughly aside by my master as he left the theatre. That night he dropped a roll of paper. That paper contained not only the outline of his colossal schemes, written in a cipher, but carefully scrawled imitations of the Duc de Rouen's signature. To that cipher I hold the key; the signatures speak for themselves. Read by the aid of that cipher the whole plot is revealed. Read it, my lord, and own that I been justified in declaring that man—here with the same mechanical, dry gesture, he pointed to Mr. Jasper Vermont—"is the vilest miscreant breathing!"

With a cry of joy the baron grasped the paper, but was too excited to read it, and stood looking round him with flashing eyes.

Adrien Leroy looked up, very pale, and sought Constance's face, but it was averted, and her trembling hands were placed beyond his reach.

"I knew it! I cried the duke, with a short laugh of triumph. "I knew we should catch the snake!"

And now," pinning Jasper still tighter to the wall, "what have you to say to this, you Judas?"

Mr. Jasper Vermont put up his fat hand and wiped the perspiration from his brow, then laughed a dry, husky laugh of defiance.

"Unhand me, you idiot," he muttered, wrenching himself from the duke's hand. "What do I say to it? I say that it's all false, a prettily devised story to shield that old rogue, whom I never saw until this hour—who, no doubt, was seen plundering my foolish friend and overshot the mark. As to the paper—bah! it is worthy of a fabulist and an idiot. What have I to do with plots and schemes? I know nothing of the paper or the bills, which I will be sworn were manufactured and procured for the purpose. I deny the whole statement emphatically; I will call upon the law to punish you, my lord duke, in company with this old impostor, for your insolence. Your name is forged, and forsooth to screen the criminal you must fix on me for scapegoat! If he is not the forger, if he was not at this old villain's office on the twenty-first, let him say where he was on that day and that hour!"

He paused, glanced keenly at Adrien, whose brow clouded and whose lips were silent, then looked round triumphantly.

"You see," he said. "Can anything disprove this old man's story more conclusively than his silence? He cannot say where he was on that day and hour."

"He cannot, but I can," said a voice, and from the back of the excited spectators stepped forth Lady Eveline. Her mask was in her hand and her face was deadly pale, but courageously determined.

"I can say where he was. He was with me at Sanbury-on-the-Thames."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd.

"With you!" exclaimed the baron, in a low voice.

"With me," repeated Lady Eveline, smiling sadly at Adrien's hand, which was raised to command her silence.

"With me. My lord, if a woman placed as I am placed at this moment is worthy of belief, I would say that notwithstanding such dark appearances, Lady Eveline's honour is unassailed save by the breath of scandal, which has given the idle folly of your son's flirtation with her a sterner name. Be that as it may, however much I may lose by the disclosure I have made, the fact is true and can be proved. There stand two witnesses to it—this poor girl and this good woman." And she laid her hand upon Kate's shoulder and looked beyond her to Lucy, who, leaning on John's arm, was standing in the shadow of the curtains.

Mr. Harker turned with surprise.

"Is that the lady who was brought to the cottage, Lucy?"

Lucy's faintly breathed "Yes" was heard as distinctly as a trumpet call, and seemed the signal for a general loosening of tongues; in the midst of which Mr. Jasper made a stealthy movement towards the back.

The duke with a gesture warned him to remain where he was, and the baron, who had been standing with Constance's hand in his, extended the other on his son's shoulder.

"Have you no word for him?" he said, with an indication towards Jasper.

Adrien pressed his father's hand, and for the first time turned to the latter.

"One word only," he said, and there seemed a dead silence. "I would ask him for his motive; I cannot believe that gain was the sole one. Some other object must have inspired him with such deep designs. I ask him to disclose it."

Jasper raised his eyes and bit his bloodless lips in dogged silence.

"You are wasting your breath!" said a voice, and Adrien, turning, found that Haidee, who had kept from his sight until now, had stepped up to his side. He started and turned away from her.

She laughed at his movement of repugnance and looked round defiantly.

"You waste your breath uselessly with him," she said, nodding at Jasper. "He's too tough a fox for you fine hunters. I'm one of his own sort and know how to bring him out. Jasper, my fine friend, you sold me as well as our young swell, and I can cut up rougher than he does. You've swindled me out of my thousand a year, and I'm going to do what I threatened. You want to know what his game was, do you?" she said, looking at Adrien. "I'll tell you. He wanted your money and your sweetheart! What, that makes you start! Ha! ha! What blind folks some of you grand people are! Now I saw that months ago, and, what's more, I saw it only half an hour ago—ask the lady herself if she didn't make it plain as a pikestaff!"

Every eye was turned on Lady Constance, who looked at Adrien beseechingly and clung closer to the baron, whose eyes flashed fire.

"She don't den, it, you see; and it wouldn't be much use, because I know it. That was the object,

and to gain it he didn't mind how many he sold—me into the bargain, but I was one too many, and now I can do my bit in the way of splitting. You want to know who this girl is?" And she laid her hand upon Reah's shoulder, who shrank beneath her touch.

"Well, I can tell you; that ruffian Wilfer was no more her uncle than I am—not so much, for I'm her aunt. I took her to Wilfer, and paid for her keep, regularly and handsomely. She's got our warm blood in her, and something more, as you can see." And she nodded to the girl's consumptive, hectic flush.

"She takes after her mother, my sister Judith, who thinks she's dead, and don't know that Mr. Jasper Vermont, who was as ignorant as she is, was sharpening the knife to cut his own throat. This Wilfer was under his thumb, like a good many more, and was put up to tell that ugly story of Adrien Leroy, by the 'cute Jasper! Ha! ha! I've lost my money, perhaps, but I've had my revenge, and that as sweet to us as to finer folks. This girl Reah, who finds the paper that tells all the tale, who do you think she is, who was her father?"

She looked round with malicious eyes, but before an answer could be given, if one had been forthcoming, a cry of horror rang out upon the air and Reah was seen to fling herself upon Adrien's breast. At the same moment something glittered in Mr. Jasper Vermont's hand, there came a flash, a report, a scream of agony, and Adrien held the lifeless form of the poor street waif.

In an instant all was confusion.

Jasper Vermont, with a cry of derision, had knocked the duke aside and leapt to the balustrade.

"Seize him! Murder! Seize him!" yelled the crowd, but Mr. Jasper had gained the coping, and turned for one second to laugh derisively.

But the laugh died on his lips, for a voice that could be heard above all the others, the shrill, vulgar voice of Haidee, screamed:

"Jasper, you have murdered your own child!"

Those who were in pursuit saw him stagger, then as the crowd parted, and he saw the motionless form of the girl who had received the bullet he had intended for Adrien Leroy, he gave one short, sharp cry like a wild beast and shot himself through the heart, falling at the very feet of the benefactor he had striven so hard to ruin and betray.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Two hours after, when all but a few of the crowd of guests had left the stately castle, the sunlight streaming through the latticed window of an upper chamber fell upon the white-covered form of a young girl that lay stretched in the last sleep upon the luxurious bed. Beside it knelt the stalwart figure of Adrien Leroy, his face buried in one hand, the other resting upon the still one that lay, white as marble, on the coverlet.

His costume of velvet and lace had been changed for a robe of everyday life, and he had come straight from the scene of the terrace to weep forth a passionate, remorseful grief over the young life which had been shed so generously for him. It mattered nothing to him that the poor girl was the daughter of the man whom he had befriended and who had used his generosity as the means by which to betray him, it mattered less than nothing that his grief might be misconstrued by the hard, uncharitable world. At the moment when the excitement was at its highest pitch, and the fickle crowd were calling for him, that they might fall down and worship their hero with renewed enthusiasm, he knelt in the deepest humility by the dead girl's side, and while he implored the pardon of the Highest and Most Merciful for the follies and sins of his past life, called upon the Almighty to record the vows which he made that for the future his feet should walk in wiser paths and lead to a full atonement for the wasteful past.

When he rose from his knees his face had lost all its old self-possession; there was a graver, more kindly and earnest light in his eyes, and as his lips pressed the dead hand of the devoted street waif he muttered a farewell prayer which was never forgotten from that hour till his last.

In the library were seated in expectant silence the baron, the Duc de Rouen, Standon and Pomfrey; a heap of papers were lying on the table before them, conspicuous amongst them that all-important roll in cipher which Reah had so providentially discovered. They were waiting for Adrien, and, knowing the cause of his absence, waited with patient respect until he thought fit to leave the silent chamber.

Presently the door opened and he entered.

The baron held out his hand without a word, and Adrien as silently grasped it, then with a sigh he sat down at the table and prepared to learn to what a vast extent his false friend had robbed him.

In silence the duke passed him paper after paper, all drawn up in the legal round-hand of Mr. Harker, and Adrien, with deep humiliation, examined them all.

With a sigh he dropped the last upon the table and looked up.

"It is like some hideous dream," he said, in a low, shocked tone. "Jasper Vermont then was but a traitor, but a thief! Can I believe—and yet, alas! how can I doubt these proofs—that he descended so low in the scale of degradation as to bribe a jockey to lose a race? to set snares for those he called by the name of friends, to coin trust and confidence into petty lucre, to play the scoundrel for such paltry sums as these? Great Heaven, to what depths of infamy will a man descend when lust of gold and envy once enter his heart. Deceived! no man was ever so deceived as I have been! And to the last I believed him true, in spite of all warnings, in spite of suspicious incidents which might have opened the eyes of one not utterly blind. It is a bitter lesson, and one I shall never forget. Duke, and all of you, if I fail to thank you as I ought for all you have done for me, it is because I am weighed down with remorse, begotten by the regret that I did not lend an ear to your warnings. Let a man take heed of his self-conceit lest he fall!"

He dropped his head upon his hands as he finished, and sighed.

The baron looked at him with a scrutinizing look. "You do not ask if the evil can be remedied, Adrien," he said, in a softer tone than he had ever used to his son, "you do not ask if any of this squandered money can be regained?"

"I care not," said Adrien. "I am willing to pay the penalty of my folly, so that all you have lost may be restored, and that the old man Harker assured me of."

The baron stroked his beard.

"You care not if this treachery should leave you penniless?" he asked.

Adrien raised his head with a mournful smile.

"But for one reason I am indifferent," he said. The baron's eyes lit up.

"I know that reason. Your thought is for another Duke, tell him; I have no words left after all I have suffered these last six hours."

The duke touched a small bell, and the bent form of Mr. Harker entered.

Adrien looked up sadly.

"There are no more hideous revelations?" he asked, painfully.

"No, there is a more satisfactory one," said the duke.

Then turning to the old man, he said:

"Place Mr. Leroy in possession of the facts with which you have made us acquainted, Mr. Harker."

The old man laid a small book upon the table.

"This will do so better than I can, gentlemen. It is an elaborate account of the various investments in which my late master placed his ill-gotten wealth. His expenses were small, and the investments, which were made with Mr. Leroy's money, amount to a large sum, gentlemen, and when realized will cover the late Mr. Jasper Vermont's enormous embezzlements."

Adrien took up the book and glanced at it.

"Is this true?" he said, with an earnestness which all understood. "Am I still a rich man?"

"The statement is correct, sir," said Mr. Harker, "and you will find that you have actually benefited by my master's cunning and astuteness."

Adrien Leroy laid the book on the table gravely.

"I am grateful," he said. "But I would leave this room penniless if by so doing I could bring one life back to us."

Then, almost overcome by his emotions, he abruptly left the room.

On the morrow the news was flying through the land.

Adrien Leroy, the well-beloved of Vanity Fair, had been betrayed by his friend and confidant. Great was the sensation when all the facts came out into the full light, and it was known that Adrien had been saved by the traitor's daughter, who had been shot by her father's own hand. The most exaggerated reports were circulated, and it was not until the double inquest that the whole truth was known and the world for once was called to look upon the summary punishment of vice.

Followed by the execrations of the world he had duped and insulted, Jasper Vermont was carried to his suicide's grave.

The day of his burial his accomplices, Haidee and Judith Levison, fled from the country, which, now that their characters stood fully revealed, would not tolerate them, and the "Coronet's" closed doors stood as a testimony against them and their like for many a long year.

The world, too, lost its fashionable monarch in Adrien Leroy. The vow he registered beside the dead body of the girl who had loved and died for him was kept as religiously as any made by the knights of old. He vanished silently from his place, and the gay and glittering throng of pleasure-makers knew him no more.

For a time he travelled through wastes and wilds, living the frugal, perilous life of the hunters and trappers, never forgetting for a moment the lesson

he had learned in the hour of his betrayal, and striving with might and main to bury the hollow, wicked past in a grave from which he hoped to raise bright flowers of the future.

And he succeeded.

One day, three years after the death of Jasper Vermont, an old white-haired man sat in the dining-room of Barmister Castle. His eyes, which were no less bright but far more gentle than when we saw him last, were bent sometimes on the cheerful fire and sometimes round to the beautiful face of his ward, Constance Tremaine, where she stood against the deep embrasure of the window looking out upon the snow.

A book was in her hand, but it was closed, and the furtive look in her sweet eyes showed that her thoughts had flown from the page of fiction to the real world that lay in the past.

Suddenly the baron raised his head. "Constance, read me the letter that came from Lady Ashford this morning. I should like to hear it again."

Constance took the letter from her pocket, but the evening had grown too dark for her to decipher the characters.

"I cannot see it, my lord; but I can remember it—or shall I ring for the lights?"

"No; I like the firelight. Tell me what they say."

"They say," said the sweet, musical voice, "that they are well; that Lucy is better than ever; and that the little boy—the third now, my lord—is as strong as a little lion. Her father is weak and feeble, but cheerful and happy, and lives only in the smiles and April tears of his grandchildren. They say that their simple prayer never ascends without our names, and they beg as a boon that Adrien may be assured of their humble love and service."

"Is that all?" asked the baron. "They are all happy?"

"And prospering. Good, simple folks, their gratitude shows out in every line, my lord, and not a sentence but denotes how heartily and deeply they hold us in remembrance."

The baron nodded, with a good-natured, contented smile.

"I am glad of it, Constance, glad of it. They are good people, and deserve all the happiness they have got. Had it not been for the old man, Adrien might have fallen into the pit that fend digged for him."

"He is dead, my lord," murmured Constance.

"True, true," said the old man, "and has passed before a more righteous and merciful judge than man."

Then he sighed.

"When does the mail come in, Constance?"

"To-night," answered Constance, with a sigh and a sudden flush that made her more lovely while it lasted, and left her paler when it had gone again.

"To-night," said the old man, echoing her sigh. "And we shall hear from him. Constance, I am an old man, and only one hope keeps the feeble breath in the feeble body. You know what it is. He says no word of returning?"

"No," murmured Constance, averting her face.

The old man sighed.

"I yearn for him as the patriarch of old longed for his well-beloved son. Constance, if I thought these eyes would close for ever ere they saw him again in life, I could not die happy. Heaven send him soon!"

Constance's lips moved, but no sound came from them, though they formed the word "Adrien."

"Always wandering," continued the old man. "Can he never forget the past?"

"He will never come home till he does," said Constance. "Has he not said so? and did he ever break his word?"

"No," said the old man, with a sudden flash of pride. "No, he will not come back until he can do so to take up a new life and his love, Constance—"

Constance had drawn farther back into the shadow, and came forward with a quick, light step to his side.

"Let us have the lights, and ask if the mail is in."

Constance rang the bell, and stood with her soft, white hand upon the old man's shoulder.

Very beautiful she looked in the bright gleam of the firelight, more beautiful because more tender and womanly than in the days of old, and the old man turned his grand, white-crowned face to look up at her.

"When he comes back, my child," he said, "he will find a sweet prize—"

"Hush!" she said, slipping her fingers to her lips, as the door opened. "He may return—but to eat it aside as no prize, but an old toy long since wearied of."

"Never!" said the old man. "Adrien loved you, Constance, and with him to love once is to love for ever."

She turned with a sigh.

"Bring the lights," she said to the dim figure near the door.

Instead of bowing and retreating, it came forward into the twilight, and knelt down beside the old man's chair.

Constance uttered a low cry and grasped the high-backed chair tightly.

The old man sprang to his feet.

"Adrien!"

"It is I," said the old musical voice. "Love can see its own in a dimmer light than this, father. Constance, my love, my eyes have pierced through the darkness of all these weary years, and seen you night and day. I have come into the light now, and to claim you for my own."

As he spoke he drew her, nerveless and weeping, to his breast, and in the firelight that threw fitful shadows on the old oak walls the old man blessed them.

A week later the church near the cascade in the woods was all ablaze with flowers and happy-cheeked children, for it was the marriage-day of Lady Constance and Adrien Leroy.

There were no fashionable silks and satins, and no mighty ecclesiastic performed the ceremony. The little old rector made them man and wife, the baron gave the beautiful bride away, and the duke, with two of the Ladies de Rouen, sustained the characters of groomsmen and bridesmaids.

The ceremony over, during which the children, who had grown to love their beautiful Lady Constance, sang a bridal hymn, the small cortege left the church in a blaze of sunlight overhead and a path of flowers beneath their feet.

Happy was the bride that morning, and Adrien as he felt her loved arm against his side grew full at heart with gratitude and love.

"My darling," he murmured, "we do not want the world, for you and I having each other's heart have all the world could give us."

But happy Constance shook her head.

"Not to the world do I owe you, Adrien; but to another. But for her, life would have ended for both of us that summer morning."

And as she spoke she turned aside and drew him to a simple grave, on which rose a plain marble cross.

Here a lady, who had witnessed the ceremony from a dark corner of the little church, and who had followed the happy couple at a distance, as if anxious to see them to the last moment they were in sight, saw the bride reverently lay her bouquet of choice white flowers upon the grave, and the bridegroom, raising his hat, as reverently take a wreath from a bystander and place beside it.

When the procession had resumed its course, still treading on flowers, and accompanied by the cheering of the villagers and children, Lady Eveline approached the flower-decked grave, and, raising a corner of the wreath, read this simple inscription, which it had partly hidden.—"REAR."

THE END.

HOW TO KEEP A WIFE'S LOVE.

MANY men, I believe, would retain the warm affection and romantic love of the woman they marry much longer if they would express the tenderness they really feel oftener.

Women love to hear things talked about. They like to hear a husband say that he loves, over and over again. They like to have him tell them in plain terms that he misses them when they are absent. They like compliments that come from the heart, however free they may be from vanity. And a little praise of dress, or face, or manner, is a great comfort to one who has given herself to one man for a lifetime.

It is said that women have more imagination than men, but in matters of love I scarcely think that it is so. Man will believe in woman's love with far less visible token of it than is necessary to prove his tenderness to her. She wants more speeches and longer letters than he does. The moment of promise and vow must be supplemented by many fond words scattered all through her life, else grievous doubts creep into her soul. A term of endearment, a pet name, some little token that she is to him what no other woman is, will make her feel matrimony a happier estate than the merriest time of girlhood. And if in public he shows other women that he esteems her and values her society, jealousy can never poison her life and his also.

There is a great deal of talk about women "loving for ever," however the man they love may turn out. It is true in one sense; he may be as rasal to other folk and not alienate her tenderness; but once convinces any high-spirited woman that her husband is false to her, that he loves her no longer, has a "romantic friendship"—the worst of all flirtations—with another woman, and in place of love comes an emotion too cold to be called hate, and that puts a stronger barrier between them than anger can raise. Silence is apt to foster the doubts that bring this

feeling with it. Often just saying, "You are better, sweeter, dearer than any one else," would save her. But man, after his boyhood, rather shrinks from wordy love-making. He thinks that his wife should take his affection for granted, even if he sits in the corner whispering to Miss Flip with his back to her all the evening, and lets her put on her shawl herself while he interests himself in Miss Flip's box.

Little words, little deeds, a little thoughtfulness, would ward off many of those "separations" which blight so many lives. Truly, these come of greater things, but little omissions often lead to them. By his neglect he spoils her temper, and the spoilt temper drives him from her at last, and turns her first foolish suspicions into realities. A. P.

SCIENCE.

UTILIZATION OF PINE LEAVES.—Pine leaves are converted into a kind of wool or wadding, which is used for upholstery instead of hair. A kind of flannel is also made from this fibre, which is said to be very superior for many hygienic uses, as for rheumatism and skin diseases. Vests, drawers, loose shirts, etc., are also made of this material. In the process of manufacture an ethereal oil is obtained, very useful as a solvent, and as a curative agent. Gas is made from the refuse, and used for lighting the manufactories; or the entire refuse may be pressed into the form of bricks, when it becomes an excellent fuel.

A MARINE MONSTER.—Satisfactory progress is being made in the construction of the sea-going monitor "Inflexible" at Portsmouth Dockyard. The "Inflexible" has been described by her designer as a rectangular armoured castle, 110ft. in length and 75ft. in breadth, protected by 24 inches total thickness of iron. This armoured castle, which rises to 10ft. above the water-line of the vessel carrying it, will enclose nothing within its walls besides the engines and boilers, the two turrets with their four guns and hydraulic loading gear, and the magazines. All armour-plating carried is confined to this castle and to the turrets which will rise above its walls. The ship proper, being entirely unarmoured, will be divided into no less than 127 water-tight compartments.

ARTIFICIAL ALIZARIN.—Hitherto artificial alizarin has been chiefly used as a steam colour, but it can also be employed like garancin and fuchsine de garance. To prepare the dye bath, chalk to the extent of 1 per cent. of the alizarin paste to be employed is stirred into the bath, which is heated to 190 degrees Fah. The goods, previously printed with the mordants, aged, prepared, and washed, are unwound into the bath, and heated quickly to a boil. The alizarin in the spent bath, in combination with the excess of chalk, is precipitated with hydrochloric acid, and recovered from the precipitate. The dyed pieces are washed in warm and cold water, and then three times, using each time $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. soap per piece; the two first soap baths at 145 degrees and the third at 190 degrees Fah. They are then placed in a weak solution of chloride of lime for half an hour at 83 degrees Fah., washed again and dried.

A RAILWAY UP MOUNT VESUVIUS.—The whole length of the railway will be 26 kilometres (16 miles), three kilometres of which are on the slope; the time required between Naples and the crater is calculated at the hour and a quarter, and the whole cost of the line is estimated at about four millions of francs. The funicular system is of course no new invention; the improvements lie in the details. The company are very sanguine as to the result, they say that as upwards of 40,000 travellers annually ascend the Right for the sake of its fine view, they may expect more to go up Mount Vesuvius, which, owing to the sea, offers a far more magnificent view. The line has been traced along a part of the mountain where there never was an eruption yet; supposing one to occur, it would in the first place give ample notice of its coming, and, secondly, it could never cause damage requiring more than perhaps 10,000*l.* for repairs.

ANÆSTHETICS.—Anæsthesia means "without feeling." It is applied now to insensibility to pain by breathing certain kinds of air or odours for the purpose of undergoing operations without feeling the pain of them. These are nitrous oxide, ether and chloroform. The first, or laughing gas, is entirely safe, and is breathed pure, wholly without any admixture of common air. Chloroform is the most dangerous; it should not be breathed unless there is 97 per cent. of air mixed with it. In breathing ether the throat should be gradually accustomed to it by sniffing it for a few breaths, and then exclude the air altogether. General readers should acquaint themselves with a few facts about the nature, uses and effects of anæsthetics. No one should use them who has any form of heart or lung disease. It is better not to take them at all, in view

of an operation, unless the system is fully under its power. There is danger if, while a person is breathing an anæsthetic, the inspiration is hard and short, or the expiration feeble and long, or the chest ceases to move, or snoring in the throat. Only chloroform induces an arrest of the heart's action; then the danger of death is most imminent.

A METALLURGIC MARVEL.—The Paris Mint has just completed the manufacture of a bar of irridiated platinum of the enormous weight of 500 lbs. and worth 210,000*fr.*, the exhibition of which took place recently at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers of Paris, in the presence of delegates from foreign countries and members of the Academy of Sciences, invited by General Morin, director of the establishment. That mass of metal, quite exceptional for its size and homogeneity, is to be used in making the standard metres and kilogrammes required by various Governments for the adoption of the metrical system, or the comparison of their weights and measures with it. Each set will cost 3,500*fr.*, and 45 have been ordered by different powers, Prussia, however, not being one of them. The fusion of the metal was effected by the aid of seven blowpipes of oxy-hydrogen gas, inserted into the cover of an enormous crucible; 40 cubic metres of that fluid were sufficient to keep up the combustion of the seven jets of ordinary gas during the two hours the combustion lasted. The operation was directed by MM. Sainte-Claire-Deville and Tresca. The light of the incandescent metal was so intense that the melting-pot could only be looked into with the aid of a coloured glass. Many centuries may pass before the occasion should arise for such a work as that executed, as the production of platinum is very limited, and does not exceed from a ton to a ton and a-half annually.

GOLD AND DROSS.

I CAN scarcely remember the time when I did not ardently long for a house of my own, a castle, a little kingdom shut in by four walls, where I could be queen, reigning with such absolute power as no man living, or woman either, dared to dispute.

At last my wish was most unexpectedly gratified. One sweet May morning somebody rapped at the door and a large square envelope was thrust into my hand by the dapper little man who waited outside.

Now I had always entertained a nervous dread of these big, potent-looking letters, with enormous seals and firm calligraphy. Somehow they had become associated in my mind with bad news, and it was not without fear and trembling that I plunged into this one.

It proved to be more mysterious than alarming. Enclosed was a deed tied with red tape, and a brief note from a lawyer in a neighbouring town—whom I had never seen or heard of, by the way—informed me I was the fortunate owner of the pretty little cottage known as Lotos Lodge, in the outskirts of my native village, and an income of two hundred a year.

This was taking me by surprise. I knew Lotos Lodge well, and had often regarded it with a greedy eye, as being nearer my ideal of a pretty home than any place in the whole village. Decidedly, the news was too good to be true.

"There must be some mistake here," I stammered, staring at the little man, and turning pale, no doubt, for I felt pale.

"I think not," he answered, laughing and twiddling his watch-chain—a very heavy one, by the way.

"I assure you there is."
"Not if you are Miss Lily Conway."
"To the best of my belief that is the name by which I was christened."

"Allow me to congratulate you, Miss Conway."
"You needn't," I said, rather sharply. "I can't comprehend my good fortune. I have no near relatives who were likely to remember me. Who, in the name of wonder—"

I stopped and looked at the little man with half a dozen interrogation points in my eyes.

But he smilingly shook his head.
"I am Mr. Green's, the lawyer's, clerk," said he. "My employer and I are both pledged to secrecy in this matter. Somebody has chosen to befriend you, and I advise you to accept the little bequest without asking too many questions about it."

"I am not such an idiot as to refuse it."

"I should hope not."
"But," I said, regarding the deed and the letter rather ruefully, "how am I to feel assured these bits of paper will not vanish into thin air by-and-by; or that I shall not wake up in the morning to find myself as poor and forlorn as ever?"
"You can only put the matter to the test. They look substantial enough."

"That's true."

"You can take possession of your new quarters as soon as you please. It is furnished throughout,

and there will be no trouble on that score. Good-morning."

He lifted his hat and retired.

But I still held fast to the deed and the letter, feeling in no wise disposed to relinquish them in a hurry.

This is how my good fortune became known to me. But who was the beneficent fairy who had thus endowed me I had no more idea than the man in the moon.

Being wise in my own conceit, if not wise otherwise, I coolly accepted what fate had given me, without puzzling my brain by ceaseless and useless conjectures.

Behold me, then, one week later, domiciled at Lotos Lodge.

How I did revel in the delicious quiet and cosiness that everywhere pervaded my new domain! Here were no cross landladies "to molest or make me afraid." Here I could shut the doors or leave them open, rise at seven or not until twelve, go fasting to bed or sup, according to my own will. Say what you will, it is pleasant to be mistress of yourself and your surroundings.

But for a haunting dread that my habitation would take upon itself the very disagreeable habit of appearing or disappearing in the night, after the fashion of Aladdin's palace—which could not have been more wonderful or enjoyable than mine—my happiness would have been complete.

Martha Burke, a dear, clever old soul, who had served my parents most faithfully in their day, and who loved me like an own child, came to take charge of the house, and be the only companion and friend for whom I confessed a need.

The arrangement was a pleasant one for us both. Martha had a little money of her own, and only wanted a home; so she served me "without wages or hire," and we shared the household duties as equally as possible.

I was sitting on the porch the third morning after this charmed life began, inhaling the odour of roses and all the blossoming shrubs with which the little garden riddled—floating sensuously upon so much beauty and brightness, when a step sounded on the gravel, and Doctor Trevor smiled down at me from six feet or so of height.

"I declare," he said, "what a sybarite you have grown to be! I always knew you had a predilection that way."

I stood up, feeling the hot blood rush to my face.

"Take care," said I, speaking banteringly to cover my confusion. "Such inaccuracy of statement is not admissible."

"To how much of my remark do you take exception?"

"To the word 'always.' Considering the fact that we have only been acquainted three weeks, and that you did not know such a person as myself existed one month ago, it is not strictly correct."

An amused smile wreathed his lips.

"I might be induced to modify the unfortunate speech."

"It is not worth the trouble. Come in, Doctor Trevor, and let me dispense the hospitalities of the place."

He shook his head.

"How do I know this is not an enchanted castle where I should be transformed into a ghoulish Cerberus the instant I crossed the threshold? I prefer my own identity out here in the fresh air and sunshine."

Looking at him, I did not wonder. Any man would dislike being deprived of such a physique. Strong, stalwart, handsome, with a fine, frank face, and the courteous, easy bearing of a man of the world, he was my ideal hero, heart, soul, brain and body. The confession is a bold one, but one can afford to say bold things upon paper.

The fact that I had a lover, one Robert Vane, did not in the least modify the admiration I felt for Doctor Trevor.

"How do you like ruling in your own domain?" he asked, with his keen eyes upon my face.

"So well that I only regret my reign did not begin sooner."

"You will tire of it after awhile."

"Perhaps. But I shall at least have had the satisfaction of knowing how it seems to be one's own mistress."

"Humph! I think I understand your feelings," he said.

"It may be so," I said, doubtfully.

"But," he went on, "we are all slaves, from birth till death. You have escaped one sort of servitude, Miss Lily, to find another."

"Don't try to frighten me."

"Heaven forbid! But you will let me look at your Sleepy Hollow sometimes?"

"As often as you like."

"Thank you. My shadow will darken your doors quite frequently then."

At this instant the garden gate clanged. I guessed intuitively who was coming, and said "Good-morn-

ing" very composedly when Robert Vane paused on the steps.

I know that the two men measured each other, as they stood face to face an instant.

A look came into Doctor Trevor's eyes that puzzled me not a little; I could not tell whether it was pain, surprise, or disappointment, for Robert had clearly betrayed our relations to each other in his greeting.

Exactly why Doctor Trevor should feel any of these emotions that seemed to express themselves in that single quick uplifting of the lids was not so clear to me.

As for Robert, he frowned, bit his lip, and shook hands rather grimly when I introduced Dr. Trevor. He was not pleased to find me tête-à-tête with another, very evidently. The fact that he was a poor dissembler made matters much worse than they need to have been. He said "very happy, I'm sure," with a look that flatly contradicted the words, and Dr. Trevor only bowed.

The latter gentleman did not remain many minutes longer. I think he felt an iciness in the atmosphere that bespoke hostility. At all events, he said a few pleasant things in his frank, fearless way, and then departed.

"Who is that fellow?" said Robert, glancing after the tall, manly figure as it moved away.

"I don't know of whom you are speaking," I said, quite sharply.

"Don't prevaricate, Lily."

"Well, if it is Dr. Trevor, I hope you will hereafter allude to him, in my presence, by a more respectful term, or not at all."

A sneer curved his lips.

"How long since you became Dr. Trevor's advocate?"

"Only since you began to abuse him by the use of disparaging epithets."

A silence fell between us that seemed ominous of tempest. But presently Robert's face, which had clouded over, began to clear again.

"You and I must not quarrel, Lily," he said, holding out his hand to me.

"I should be very sorry if we did."

"Would you? Then you will see Dr. Trevor no more?"

"I did not say so. Indeed, I shall see him, if he take the trouble to come here occasionally, as I suppose he will, after the fashion of other friends."

"Oh, Lily!"

"Why do you object to his coming?"

"What do you know of the man? Nothing. He came here a month ago, a stranger. He may be a vile impostor."

"An impostor with that face and bearing? Never! Mr. Underhill told me Doctor Trevor was one of the most promising young physicians. He has come to our town for quiet, to write a medical work for which he has long been collecting material."

"I only hope it may prove so," returned Robert, the frown on his brow deepening perceptibly.

"Let us change the subject," said I, almost with impatience. "I'm tired of this."

"And I. When are you going to marry me, Lily?"

"When I grow tired of myself, and want a better companion."

"Now you are trifling."

"Well, when you think it wisest and best, since my first answer does not please you."

He made a step towards me, his whole face lighting up; and at the same instant a clanging noise sounded in my ears once more.

"That confounded gate!" ejaculated Robert, drawing back. "Who is coming now?"

Who, indeed? Fearing that my castle was about to be besieged, I stepped clear of the overhanging roses and honeysuckles that shaded the porch, and glanced down the path.

Doctor Trevor was returning. Behind him came the most comical figure I had ever beheld—a grizzled old woman, with unkempt hair, little bead-like eyes, and a skin yellow as parchment. She had on a gray stuff gown, scant in skirt, and several inches too short, a shabby straw bonnet, and a faded shawl that was pinned squarely across her shoulders. From one bony hand swung a bundle tied in a red cotton handkerchief.

"Heaven deliver us!" muttered Robert, with a shrug of disgust, as his glance fell upon this absurd figure.

I stood still, saying nothing until Doctor Trevor reached the steps with his strange companion.

"I'm back again, Miss Conway," and he looked up at me with a cheerful smile.

"So I perceive, Doctor Trevor."

"This lady was inquiring the way to your house, and I thought it my duty to walk back with her."

He spoke gravely enough now, and moved aside a little, so that the old woman confronted me.

Even in the surprise and perturbation of the moment I could not help comparing his demeanour with that of my lover.



[A JEALOUS LOVER.]

Robert was inclined to ridicule the poor creature; but there was no trace of amusement to be found in Doctor Trevor's countenance—only interest and commiseration.

"What can I do for you, my good woman?" inquired I.

"Everything, if you are so disposed, miss," she answered, in a cracked, shrill voice.

"That is too indefinite. Come in and sit down; you can tell me what you want when you have rested."

"No," answered the old woman, planting her feet resolutely upon the steps, and looking at me keenly with those cunning black eyes. "I don't enter that house until I know whether I'm to stay or not."

"To stay? The woman's mad!" whispered Robert, and I inclined to the same opinion.

"Of course you can stay until you are refreshed, and have had some dinner, too, if you like."

"That ain't what I mean. Don't you know me, Lily Conway?"

I gave a decided negative.

"No, to be sure. How should you, when you were only a baby the last time I saw you? But I'm sure you've heard my name often enough. I'm your great-aunt, Sally Peters."

Yes, I knew her now, and shook hands with her, though not very cordially, for I had always heard her spoken of as an eccentric, half-crazed creature, of small comfort to anybody but herself.

"I've come to make my home with you, dear," she said, with a pleading, wistful sort of look upon her face. "I mean, of course, if you will take me in. I'm old and forlorn, and almost ready to drop into my grave. I can't trouble any one very long. But I have neither chick nor child nor friend, save you. Don't let me go to the workhouse to die there all alone."

Her poor old voice shook at the last, and tears rushed to the little black eyes, dimming their brightness. There was a rude sort of pathos about

the woman's manner, more than the words she had uttered, that appealed strongly to my sensibilities.

For a moment I must have looked blank. My dreams of a quiet, care-free life had come to sudden grief. I was mortal, and could not help feeling a keen pang of disappointment; but my better nature was uppermost in a moment.

"Poor soul," said I, dropping my hand caressingly upon the yellow and wrinkled one uncertainly extended. "Banish all your fears for the future. While I have a roof to shelter me you shall share it."

I glanced round half-defiantly as I spoke, knowing well that three pairs of eyes were bent inquiringly upon my face.

"Heaven bless you," murmured Aunt Sally, pressing my hand to her lips. "You don't know what you have undertaken. But Heaven will strengthen you, and reward you at last as you deserve."

"I don't know that we merit any reward for simply doing our duty. But go in, please, and make yourself comfortable. I'll join you presently."

She entered the house, and closed the door. Then I folded my arms, and stood waiting for the storm of expostulation and remonstrance I expected to encounter.

Dr. Trevor stood perfectly silent, his eyes bent upon the ground. But a hard, sullen, angry expression had settled upon Robert Vane's face.

"Lily," he said, in a stern voice, "you will never be guilty of this piece of Quixotism?"

"If you refer to the shelter that has been offered that lone old woman—I shall!"

"What claim has she upon you?"

"The claim of common humanity, at least."

"You shall not saddle your life with such an incubus," he broke out, fiercely. "I will not permit it."

"Robert," I said, quietly, but firmly, "I am, as yet, my own mistress. I choose to do what is right."

"Then you will suffer that woman to come between you and me? Oh, Lily!"

He turned away, and strode down the path with hot, angry haste. Dr. Trevor lingered a moment longer. I could see that he was studying my face curiously.

"Miss Lily," he said, in his abrupt way, "are you sure you realize what you are doing?"

"Quite sure, Dr. Trevor."

"This woman is old and feeble, and she is likely to fall ill upon your hands. Your new servitude is coming upon you with a vengeance."

"It can't be helped."

"How about the free life, the still delight, you had planned?"

"I have 'still delight' in my heart, which ought to be all-sufficient."

Dr. Trevor looked at me with an odd sort of smile upon his face.

"I'm afraid you are a stubborn little creature. Well, have your own way. But I shall certainly look in now and then, to see how you like this new régime, in which your cherished plans are all balked by a stern reality."

"If you expect to see me swerve from my present resolutions, I warn you to prepare for disappointment."

"I accept the warning. Good-morning."

And so we parted.

My courage did almost fail me when I reflected upon what I had done.

If Aunt Sally had come to me in a carriage and four, preferring the same request, I should have answered:

"Go your way. Leave me in peace and quietness within my four walls."

But she seemed so poor, so miserable, so forlorn, that I could not close my heart against her; and having opened my heart, of course the portals of my castle must open likewise, and take her in.

Martha Burke scolded a little when I told her what had been done. But she was too kind and considerate to oppose my wishes very vehemently.

"Where have you put the poor creature?" asked she.

"Taken her upstairs, and given her the best bedroom. She's there now, fast asleep in the spare bed."

"Oh, good gracious! Was there ever such a child?"

"You dear old Martha," said I, coaxingly, "what else could be done? Do you think I could be easy a moment, knowing the poor old soul was less comfortable than myself?"

"I know you couldn't. But how are we all to live? Our expenses will be heavier with her here, and there will be no more money than at present."

Very true. I sat down and thought the matter all over. An idea soon suggested itself—ideas always come when they are so earnestly desired as was mine.

"I heard, yesterday, that Dr. Trevor was inquiring for an amanuensis. He wishes his book copied for the press as fast as it arranged. I'll apply for the situation."

"You?" ejaculated Martha.

"Why not? I write a fair hand. I can bring his notes home, and do the copying here."

Behold me, then, the very next morning—if I expected the situation, grass must not grow underneath my feet—knocking at the door of Dr. Trevor's private parlour. Of course Martha was with me.

"Come in, come in," said Dr. Trevor, cordially, giving me both hands as we confronted each other on the threshold. "This is a surprise. I didn't expect you would return my visit so soon."

"This is purely a business call," said I, colouring, and not a little vexed at the amused twinkle in his eye.

"Eh?" growing instantly grave. "What is it? I hope your protégée has not fallen ill already?"

"No. Aunt Sally seems quite cheerful to-day. But she has a dreadful cough. You must prescribe for it the next time you come to Lotos Lodge."

"So I will; and send a bottle of syrup back by you."

"I heard you wanted an amanuensis," said I, plunging boldly into the real object of my visit.

"Do you think I could fill the office acceptably?"

He stared, hesitated a moment, and then answered, smilingly:

"You might, if you were not such a little mouse of a thing."

"I don't know what my size has to do with the matter."

"Seriously, neither do I. Yes, you shall be my amanuensis."

"Can I take my work home with me?"

"In that case, you would be my secretary. I couldn't dictate—you would be compelled to copy from my notes. Don't you see the difference?"

Of course. How could I have so confounded the two words? My countenance fell. I could never think of coming here, day after day, and writing under his critical eyes all the while.

"I see, Dr. Trevor, that I must give up this plan, and decide upon something else."

"I was rising to go, but he detained me."

"Is it so necessary you should do something, Miss Lily?"

"Yes."

"You shall be my secretary. I can furnish you with notes to copy at home, as well as any other way. Here is the first instalment," thrusting a roll of papers into my hand. "When you are done with these, I'll bring you more."

"Thank you."

I grasped the formidable roll, and beat a hasty retreat.

Misfortunes never come singly. That very day a visitor made her appearance at Lotos Lodge—an old friend at the seminary where I spent two terms. I call this visit a misfortune because I had never been particularly fond of Lina Chatfield, and because my hands were full already without the additional burden of a guest to entertain.

"What a pretty place! And how sweet you look," she said, kissing me rapturously, though the first greetings were already over. "You ought to be very happy here."

"I hope to be."

"I heard of your good fortune in having this little paradise given you, and hurried hither to take a look at it, and you."

"Good news must travel fast," said I, drily.

"Sometimes. Who could have remembered you so kindly?"

"I'm as much in the dark as you are."

"Strange, isn't it, Lily?"

"Very strange."

"Is it a bequest, a legacy, or a gift?"

"I don't know, but incline to the opinion that my benefactor is still living—in which case, of course, it would be a gift."

"Well, I declare I never heard of anything so eccentric. But I'm glad, dear, you have such a home."

Miss Chatfield met Aunt Sally at the tea-table, then and there learning, for the first time, there was such a person in the house. The two did not assimilate at all. Lina snubbed the poor old soul so unobtrusively that I was compelled more than once to bite my lips in order to keep back angry words of remonstrance.

"Who is that funny old woman?" she asked, the instant we were alone again.

"My great-aunt, Sally Peters. She is to live with me," I answered, stantly.

"Oh, some miserly old soul you intend to coddle for the sake of her money!"

"Aunt Sally hasn't a penny in the world, that I am aware."

Miss Chatfield arched her brows in real dismay. "You don't mean to tell me, Lily Conway, that you have taken a pauper into your heart and home? I thought you had better sense than to be guilty of such folly."

It is very possible that Lina's ideas of what constituted good sense and my own did not harmonize.

I excused myself presently, and went up to my own room to examine the roll of papers Dr. Trevor had given me. I must work, though forty self-invited guests stood at my elbow.

Such a condition as I found those papers in! They were thickly scrawled with hieroglyphics both in pencil and ink, and blotting paper, envelopes, the backs of old letters, and even blank leaves from pocket diaries, had been called into requisition.

I had taken a quire of fresh foolscap from my desk, and was regarding the array before me with a dismayed countenance, when Miss Chatfield knocked at the door.

"It's lonesome without you, Lily," she began, apologetically. "Why child, what in the name of wonder are you doing?"

"Earning my bread and butter."

"I should think so. Of course I am in the way?"

"Not if you sit down, and remain quiet."

She smiled, and dropped languidly into an easy-chair by the window.

After an hour's hard labour, during which I made considerable progress, the papers were consigned to the oblivion of my desk, and we went downstairs again.

In the balmy twilight I ran down the garden walk to the gate for a breath of fresh air. While I stood with my elbows settled upon it, in a very free-and-easy way, somebody came up the road from the village.

It was Robert. He approached the gate, and stopped on the other side, looking somewhat confused and agitated.

"I'm afraid I left in a passion the last time I was here," he said. "But you tried me sorely. I'm sorry. Pray forgive me, Lily."

"Certainly; I like to forgive."

Perhaps my manner was not very cordial. He stood looking at me keenly for some minutes.

"Don't think I've changed my opinion in regard to that—that old woman," he said, abruptly. "I haven't—I never shall. You mustn't be foolish, dear. It is out of all reason for her to expect to burden your young life."

"I do not think of Aunt Sally in that light, Robert."

"But she is a burden. A feeble, helpless old woman, that must be watched and coddled like a child! It's a shame that she should thrust herself upon you. If you loved me, Lily, you would see all this as I do."

I laid my hand upon his.

"Could you not help me bear such a burden, Robert?" I said.

"No!" sharply. "And you would have no right to ask it of me. You must choose between her and me."

"She is poor and friendless. What can I do with her?"

"Send her to the almshouse."

"Oh, Robert! you can't mean it?"

"I do," he answered, sullenly.

There came a sudden rush of tears to my eyes, but I resolutely kept them back.

"Come into the house," I said, abruptly, after a pause. "Miss Chatfield is here, and I want you to see her."

He opened the gate, and we went up the walk together. Lina was in the parlour, where the lamps had already been lighted, in full toilet. She had on a maize-coloured silk, trimmed with black lace, that was admirably suited to her rather swarthy complexion. Though somewhat sallow by daylight, few women "light up" as well as Lina does.

She and Robert were mutually pleased. By a thousand coquettish wiles she kept him at her side, and they were in the midst of an animated tête-à-tête when the door-bell rang.

It was Dr. Trevor who met me in the hall.

"I was going past," said he, "and thought I must look in to see how you were getting on with your work. Is it worse than deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics?"

"Really, I don't see much difference."

He laughed.

"Remember, the task is of your own seeking. You can give it up when tired of it."

"I believe I have not complained as yet."

We now entered the parlour. I saw Lina start quickly away from Robert's side, flushing rosy red, as she glanced round at us.

Dr. Trevor, after a minute's deliberate pause, crossed the floor, and shook hands with her.

"In the name of wonder, Miss Chatfield, when did you come hither?"

"To-day," she answered, with a slight shade of embarrassment in her manner.

"You are the last person I expected to meet here."

"I might make the same remark of yourself, Dr. Trevor."

She smiled sweetly upon him, and I could only stammer:

"Really, I was not aware that you two were old friends."

"Our acquaintance dates back several months, Miss Lily."

"How nice that you should be one of the very first persons to meet me at Lotos Lodge, Dr. Trevor," said Lina, artlessly.

A sudden suspicion flashed upon my mind. Had Miss Chatfield come in utter ignorance of Dr. Trevor's presence, as she pretended? I thought not. And if not—well, it was clear then why she had come.

We spent a delightful evening. Robert thawed, even to Dr. Trevor, and nothing disturbed the harmony of the spheres. Lina was gay, brilliant, witty—so vivacious and sparkling, indeed, that she kept both gentlemen chained to her side, for the most part, and mine was the rôle of wallflower.

A week went by in the same manner. Robert took to visiting Lotos Lodge much more frequently. But it soon became apparent that I was not the chief magnet that drew him there.

Did the discovery pain me? I don't know. That whole period seems now like a dream.

Dr. Trevor, too, spent nearly every evening with us. He ceased to invent excuses, and it soon became a settled thing that he was to drop in upon us whenever he felt so disposed.

After the gentlemen had gone away, one evening, and I had retired to my own room, Lina came dawdling in. She had on a soiled wrapper, with a bit of dirty lace at the throat; the rich evening dress had been discarded. She never cared for her appearance when there were no admirers present.

"You've been crying," she said, abruptly, giving me a sharp glance. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I'm hot and nervous—that's all."

"No, it isn't. But I can guess your trouble—you are afraid I shall win away your lover."

The hot blood rushed to my face in an instant.

"You are welcome to win anybody you can."

"Now don't fly in a passion, Lily. I thought we had better come to an understanding, and so we will."

"I don't want any understanding."

"Mr. Vane seems inclined to flirt with me, that's true," she said, not in the least minding my remark. "But I can't help it, and—it means nothing. I shouldn't marry him if he asked me, so make your mind easy on that score. The fact is, Lily," she went on, lazily twisting the heavy coils of black hair that had fallen loose about her superb head, "I'm madly in love with another. You can guess who it is—Dr. Trevor. He's been my ideal hero for months. I came here because I knew he was here, and because I meant to make him mine."

She stopped, and turned her face slowly towards me. It was all of a rich glow—the eyes sparkling, the lips apart. I saw then how she could, and did, love.

"You don't know what passion there is in me," she ejaculated, with a laugh. "I could die for the man who rules my heart, and count it gain. But a piece of still nature like yourself cannot understand such depths of passion."

Could I not? Lina did not hold the keys to my inner nature, and how was she to know this?

If I had a secret trouble there was little chance to brood over it.

The very next day Aunt Sally fell ill. She was cross, querulous, almost unmanageable. She insisted that I should remain in the room with her most of the time, and as my copying must be done, I had my desk removed to her apartment, and worked while she slept, to be ready to amuse her when she awoke.

Days wore on, and she got no better. During this time Robert and Dr. Trevor came to the house as frequently as before. I seldom saw them now, but I could hear the murmur of their voices in pleasant talk until late at night every evening.

Aunt Sally heard them too.

"Lily, my dear," she would say sometimes, with tears in her funny black eyes, "I'm making a weariness of your life, breaking your heart, and keeping you away from those you love. But you will bear with me a little longer, girl? Don't leave me to pass my last hours alone! You won't, tell me you won't!"

"I shall never leave you," I would say, soothingly, and kiss her, and smooth back her gray hair, for, odd and whimsical as she was, my labour was fast becoming a labour of love.

"Heaven bless you, child. You'll have your reward, mind that, you'll have your reward."

At last one still, breathless day brought a great change to us. Dr. Trevor came over early in the afternoon, looking grave and worn. I happened to be downstairs, and met him there.

"A malignant fever has broken out in the village," he said. "The Brower family have been stricken down, and there are other cases. They've sent for me."

I looked up at him eagerly.

"You will go?"

"To be sure. Perhaps I can be of use. Heaven knows. But it is a dreadful disease. I hope it will not spread—every precaution must be taken."

I turned away, with a sudden choking in my throat. Half-way upstairs the rustle of a dress caught my ear. I glanced back to see Dr. Trevor standing as I had left him, but Lina was now at his side, very pale and scared looking.

"What is it?" I heard him ask.

"I know where you are going," said she, faintly. "For Heaven's sake be careful! Don't go."

"I must," and a sudden red flamed into his cheeks. "You should not try to keep me back, Lina."

She stood staring at him blankly a moment; then burst into tears.

"Oh, no, no! What right have I to influence you?" she cried, running quickly from him, as if afraid to trust herself longer in his presence.

That night, at dark, a man came to me with a message.

"Little Benny Brower is askin' for you, ma'am," said he. "He can't be quieted. His mother thought you'd go to him if you knew. I reckon he won't live the night out."

"Certainly I will go," I answered, tears filling my eyes, for Benny had been one of my favourites. I threw on my hat and scarf, and left the house, telling nobody of my destination. It would not have been pleasant to encounter remonstrance just then.

I was not long in reaching the cottage occupied by the Browsers. I saw at a glance that Benny was almost gone. But it did me good to see how his face lighted up as I entered.

His mother left us alone together in the bare, black room lighted by a single candle. I struggled in between the bed and wall, and knelt there on the hard floor, talking and praying with poor Benny, humouring every fancy of his childish mind.

At last a silence fell between us; and then the door opened and somebody entered.

It was Dr. Trevor. He had scarcely turned to approach the bed when a second figure came into the room with a soft rustle, bringing a faint, sweet perfume with it.

A sudden exclamation burst from Dr. Trevor's lips, as he glanced back at the new comer.

"Good Heavens! Miss Chatfield!"

She walked slowly up to him, and touched his arm. Neither of the two saw me, crouching there behind the couch, nearly hidden by the bedclothes.

"Yes," she said, in a soft whisper, face and eyes all aglow, "it is Lina Chatfield."

"Why are you here?"

"I came to die with you! Could I sit quietly at home, and see you face this danger by yourself? Oh, never!"

There was a whole volume of slumbering passion in her voice. I expected to see Dr. Trevor catch her in his arms. But he did not; he drew back a step, his face turned scarlet.

"This is madness. Pray go, go at once from this fever-stricken place."

"And leave you here? I will not."

"You must. For Heaven's sake, listen to reason."

You cannot remain here."

He took her hand now, sternly and coldly, and led her to the door. She paused there a moment, gazing at him with eyes that seemed to pierce to his very soul.

"Oh, Ralph," she cried, with a low wail in her voice, "is this all? Will you send me from you thus?"

"Yes. We will try to forget you were so mad as to come at all. I shall not betray your folly. Good-bye."

Look and tone must have told her she was nothing to this man—that her freak seemed childish and silly to him. She went out, silently, and closed the door.

Then I was compelled to rise and face him. He started a little, changed colour, said, "You here?" but nothing more. For the next three hours his whole attention seemed to be absorbed by the little sufferer on the bed.

At midnight all was over—the fluttering spirit had gone home.

Dr. Trevor walked home with me, through the silent night. Not a word was spoken between us. There was something odd and constrained in his manner, something I could not comprehend.

Old Martha met us at the door.

"Wherever have you been, Lily?" she exclaimed. "I've hunted the house all over for you. And something dreadful has happened."

"To Aunt Sally?" I asked, quickly.

"No. Miss Chatfield has gone—left for good."

While I stood in a sort of trance, looking very stupid and sadly bewildered no doubt, she brought me a scrap of paper, upon which Lina had written these words:

"I know you have heard of hearts caught at the rebound, Lily. Mine has been. Dr. Trevor does not care for me—I have found it out to-night. But Robert does, and I have fled with him. I don't ask you to forgive us—you can't. But I hope you'll be happy without us, Lina."

I read this strange note two or three times through, then gave it to Dr. Trevor. Somehow it seemed the natural thing to do, under the circumstances.

A silence fell. Suddenly I felt his hands clasping mine; his eyes scanning my face long and eagerly. "My darling," he cried, "now I can tell you how much I love you. Can you, dare you trust yourself with me?"

What did I answer? Well, it does not matter. But when we both knelt by Aunt Sally's bedside, a little later, the old woman said:

"I'm glad—so glad of this. Robert Vane never deserved you, Lily. Now you've won a heart of gold instead of dross. As for Dr. Trevor, he'll have a good, true wife—and a rich one."

Then it all came out how she had felt herself forlorn and friendless, and had come to me, pretending she was poor only to test my generosity. Lotos Lodge was her gift. That was the first step in her ruse.

Well, I am Dr. Trevor's wife now, and the happiest woman in the world. Aunt Sally is dead; and, as she declared she should do, she left me a very rich woman.

R. W.

GEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY ON THE CORNISH COAST.
—At certain periods the action of the Atlantic wave lays bare a part of the sea beach known as Maer Lake, a little distance north of Bude. At such times any one may notice at intervals dark patches below high-water mark of dirty-looking decayed stuff, suggesting the idea of being at some remote period a land surface, forest bed, preceding, perhaps, the glacial period. Hazel nuts, roots of trees, and quantities of decayed wood have been found here, and

probably more careful research would bring to light bones and horns of animals. It is on such beds as these in different parts of England that remains of the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, etc., have been brought to light, but whether the mass of bone which has been discovered during the past weeks at Maer Lake belongs to either or neither of these animals is not for us to decide. The part discovered appears to be the pate of some enormous animal measuring about 53 inches from horn to horn. The eye sockets and nasal organ of this once huge creature appear perfect, and the length from the existing nose to the brow of the head exceeds 26 inches. A cavity, evidently the seat of the brain, exists and is perfect, the opening being 13 inches by 9. The weight of the mass exceeds 2 cwt. It is curious that on the spot where these remains have been found an immense rib-bone was discovered some years ago. This mammoth-sized head affords an opportunity of study for the geologist and a matter which may well receive the investigation of some distinguished scientific person.

FACETIÆ.

WHY is a troublesome tooth like a portion of land?
Because it's an acre.

WHY is a beefsteak like a locomotive? It's not of much account without it's tender.

AN old farmer says: "Talk about drainage, the surest drain on a farm is a mortgage at a high rate of interest."

A GERMAN writing home concluded his letter thus: "If I live till I die, tell my friends at home that I shall visit mine fatherland before I leave here."

MATRIMONIAL FELICITY.

Wife: "You're a good-for-nothing brute!"

Husband: "Then it was so kind of you to marry me!—married for love, eh?"

AN aristocrat on being requested by a rich and vulgar young fellow for permission to marry "one of his girls," gave this rather crushing reply: "Certainly; which would you prefer, the housemaid or the cook?"

"FAITH, and why did yer cut a hole in me ticket?" said a Wicklow Home Ruler recently on his first trip by that novel invention a railway. "Well," replied the ticket-porter, "it was in order to let you through."

"SAL," said a girl, looking out of the upper storey window of a milk shop, and addressing another girl who was trying to enter at the front door, "we've all been to a meeting and been converted; so when you want milk on Sundays you will have to come in the back way!"

CASTA DIVA.

Dick (to friend about to marry): "Pooty is she? Well, wot's'er cast o' features?"

Harry: "She ain't got no cast in her features—that's in her eye. Her features is straight enough."—*Fun.*

MUTUAL AGREEMENT.

"You quarrel with your wife, my friend, and why? Do you not think and wish alike?"

"Heaven knows we do," said poor Caudle, "each of us wants to be master."

A COUNTRYMAN has had damages awarded him for being butted over a fence by a neighbour's bull. The smallness of the sum is due to the plaintiff's avowal that he was trying to get over the fence as quickly as possible, so that the bull only helped him in carrying out an intention of his own free will.

A REASON WHY!

Susan: "Oh, Robin, Robin, how can you be so cruel, as to go and steal away the poor little bird's nest?"

Robin: "Lawk's, miss, I dunno! I thinks it mun be 'oos I'st land o' new-laid eggs."—*Fun.*

AN exquisitely-dressed young gentleman, after buying another seal to dangle about his person, said to the jeweller that he would—ah, like to have—ah, something engraved on it—ah, to denote what he was! "Certainly, certainly," said the tradesman, "I'll put a cipher on it."

AWFUL PROSPECT FOR SOMEBODY.

Strong-minded thing in specs. (to mild provincial maiden): "Shah! No! This was the Oar. The Shah was the horrid man with the wives; and if all the women in the world were like me they'd Shah him!"

It is satisfactorily demonstrated that every time a wife scolds her husband she adds a new wrinkle to face! It is thought that the announcement of this fact will have a most salutary effect, especially as it is understood that every time a wife smiles on her husband it will remove one of the old wrinkles!

DISILLUSION; OR, THE SKETCHING SCHOOL.

Artist (cleaning his palette): "Uncommonly obliging person—your master, the farmer! I asked his permission, and he said I might paint my picture in the middle of his field, and stop as long as ever I liked!

Most courteous, I must say. Quite as if I was doing him a favour, instead—"

Suffolk Carter: "Wh'come o' course, so y' do. Wh' yeon kip the crows off, bo'!"—[Exit on the broad grin.]—*Punch.*

AN INNOCENT HINT.

Auntie: "What is Nellie's nose for?"

Nellie (doubtfully): "To smell with."

Auntie: "And what is Nellie's mouth for?"

Nellie (cautiously): "To eat with."

Auntie: "And what are Nellie's ears for?"

Nellie (confidently): "Earrings?"—*Punch.*

ODD RABBIT 'EM!—The *Globe*, speaking of a scarcity of rabbits in Denmark, says that the Government has sent an agent to purchase fifty thousand in order to "re-populate" the Danish isles. The new "population" will certainly have "more of the antique run 'un than the Dane," as Horatio observed on a melancholy occasion.—*Fun.*

PRECISE.

A witness in court, who had been cautioned to give a precise answer to every question, and not to talk about what he might think the question meant, was interrogated as follows:

"You drive a waggon?"

"No, sir; I do not."

"Why, man, did you not tell my learned friend so this moment?"

"No, sir."

"I put to you on your oath: do you not drive a waggon?"

"No, sir."

"What is your occupation, then?"

"I drive a horse, sir."

THE HUMAN RACE.

"Tom?"

"Sir?"

"What is the great race to come off that there is so much talk about?"

"What great race? I haven't heard of any great race."

"The human race, the great human race, that is to come off before long."

"Ah! you are the biggest idiot I ever saw—the human race, that ain't a hoos race—it is the people in the world, the inhabitants."

"Who told you?"

"I allers know'd it, and so did everybody else but you. I wish everybody had larned, so that they wouldn't bother respectable men with such foolish questions."

HOW TO MANAGE MISTAKES.

As a minister and a lawyer were riding together, said the minister to the lawyer:

"Sir, do you ever make mistakes in pleading?"

"I do," said the lawyer.

"And what do you do with the mistakes?" inquired the minister.

"Why, sir, if large ones, I mend them; if small ones, I let them go," said the lawyer. "And pray, sir," continued he, "do you ever make mistakes in preaching?"

"Yes, sir, I have."

"And what do you do with the mistakes?"

"Why, sir, I dispose of them in the same manner you do; I rectify the large ones, and pass the small ones. Not long since," continued he, "as I was preaching, I meant to observe that the Evil One was the father of liars, but made a mistake, and said the father of lawyers. The mistake was so small that I let it go."

NO EFFECT.

A German paper contains a reply from a clergyman who was travelling, and who stopped at a hotel much frequented by wags and jokers.

The host, not being used to have clergymen at his table, looked at him with surprise; the clerks used all their artillery of wit upon him without eliciting a remark in self-defence.

The worthy clergyman ate his dinner quietly, apparently not observing the gibes and sneers of his neighbours.

One of them, at last, in despair at his forbearance, said to him:

"Well, I wonder at your patience! Have you not heard all that has been said against you?"

"Oh, yes; but I am used to it. Do you know who I am?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I will inform you. I am chaplain of a lunatic asylum; such remarks have no effect upon me."

ORGAN V. PULPIT.—We know a jolly young musician who may be fairly claimed as a mutual admirationist. Not long ago the youthful Mr. C— was engaged to manipulate the ivory on a church organ at a town not far distant from the metropolis. At the same church and upon the same occasion, a popular clergyman was engaged to officiate in the pulpit. Both of these gentlemen were rather "loud" in the performance of their duties, and both left

down the following morning by the same train, and both occupied the same seat, the young organist recognizing the clergyman, but himself unknown to the cloth. Passing the compliments of the morning, the cloth queried if the young man attended church on the preceding day. Organ said he had that pleasure, and asked the cloth how he liked the music. Pulpit said the music would have been excellent if the organ had not been played in so loud and boisterous a manner. Then old Pulpit asked young Organ how he liked the preaching. Organ said: "Not at all; the preacher was too loud and ranting." The joke was too good, and a gentleman in the next seat, who had listened to the conversation and knew both parties, turned about and kindly introduced the clergyman to his organist, when followed a mutual admiration of each other's services on the Sabbath.

ARTLESS AXIOMS.

Most every one loves to listen to a slander, but there ain't but phew but what despise the author ov it.

I meet a great many men whose talk iz like a bunch of fire-crackers when they are first touched off, full of pop for a few minits, and then all iz over.

Without munny, without friends, and without impudence, iz about as low down in this world as enny man kan git, and keep virtuous.

After a man has passed the age ov fifty-seven, about all he kan find to talk about and brag on iz that he has got more pains and akes than enny ov the rest ov his nabors.

There iz nothing that a man iz so certain ov as he iz ov what he sees, and yet there iz nothing after all that deceives him oftener.

Beware ov the man who iz alwuz red-dy to swop old friends for new ones.

The dog that will phollow everybody ain't worth a kuss.

When I pla whist I alwuz like a phool for a partner, for they do hold such good hands.

I hav had people set down bi mi side, and konfidenchally undertake to explain smthing to me of grato importance, and after talking thirty-four minuts bi the watch, I not only didn't kno what they had been trying to tell, but had forgot a good deal that I knew before.

One ov the most perfekt viktorys yu kan achieve over enny man iz to beat him in politeness.

Young man, yu had better be honest than cunning, and it iz hard work to be both.

HOW TO LIVE AT A HOTEL.

A hotel thief, who was recently arrested in London, had this memorandum on his person:

"Receipt how to live on six shillings a week. In the first place, you must be possessed of a good suit of clothes.

"Secondly, you must have confidence in yourself otherwise called 'plenty of cheek.'

"Thirdly, you must provide yourself with a leather bag—about two shillings—well stuffed with paper.

"When you arrive at any place where you wish to stay a few days, walk into an hotel and ask if they have a bed at liberty for a few nights. If 'yes' is the answer, make yourself at home, walk into the room and order dinner; and ask to be shown into your bedroom, as you want to wash; come down again, leaving your bag upstairs, taking care to keep it locked up, that they shall not see what it contains.

"Take dinner—roast beef, fowl, fish, pastry, cheese, etc., taking care to order half a pint of sherry; then they will think you know your way about and have plenty of money. After dinner call for whisky hot and a cigar, which is very nice. Sit for an hour or two, and then go out on business or a walk, as the case may be.

"Order tea for half-past five, with toast. After tea sit awhile, then ring for brandy hot. Then take a walk, weather permitting. Come in again about nine; call for whisky hot, cigars and slippers. Pull off your boots and make yourself comfortable by the fire. Have another whisky hot. Ring the bell for your candle, and inquire the number of room.

"Retire to bed about eleven o'clock, taking care to order breakfast for nine, with ham or eggs, or a nice chop, etc. After breakfast take a walk, and so on as before.

"P. S.—The bag is the main point. It may serve you for a week; it has served me for eight days; but you must watch well the people whom you are with. Sometimes they will ask if it is 'convenient for you to settle your bill?' If so, say:

"Of course it is. I am just going to the post-office for a letter. Get my bill made out and I will settle it when I come back."

"Of course take care not to return for your bag, and be careful to put your comb and brush in your pocket every morning, as you cannot tell what may happen during the day, and you want to be off in a hurry; but above all keep a bold face on it. Then buy another bag and proceed on your journey.

"You need never fear getting a night's lodging if

you possess a bag, and if you don't happen to have one don't despair, but go straight in and ask for a bed; they will not refuse. Order supper and breakfast and such like. After breakfast you should say:

"Can I have the bed again to-night, as I don't think I shall be able to do my business to-day?"

"I have stayed three days and nights when I haven't had a bag—when I had but one halfpenny in the world to bless myself with. But then, you will say, what are you going to do for a bag? Well, there are lots of bags at these hotels; help yourself to one when you depart, and you are right again.

"It is a month to-night since I had but one halfpenny left and no bag, and to night, the 16th of January, I have one halfpenny in my pocket and a bag to be going on with, living like a fighting cock and seeing almost all the towns in England. Yours, etc.—E. J."

MIND YOUR OWN AFFAIRS.

Just mind your own affairs,
And let your neighbour's traits alone;
If they climb on three flights of stairs,
Or even to the moon,
The trouble and the toil are theirs,
And theirs the cross or throne.

A carriage at the door
Of the mansion across the way
Comes often, and it makes the tour
Where fashion holds the sway.
What if they ride who walked when poor?
The bills they make they pay.

The ladies richly dressed
In furs and satins, silk and lace,
Dame Fortune with abundance blessed.
Would you, if in their place,
Spurn smiling plenty that carressed
You with its rosy face?

Some have grown rich and great
By minding business of their own;
Some famous in affairs of state,
Winning a grand renown;
Some mighty men of worth and weight
Wearing the laurel crown.

I am not overseer
Of other men's minds and affairs;
Home is my happy hemisphere,
My neighbours' joys and cares,
Their toils and triumphs, there and here,
At home, abroad, are theirs.

I have no right to know
Their choice of company and friends,
Or look to see who come and go,
Who borrows or who lends;
To me I'm sure they nothing owe,
Blest is the gift Heav'n sends.

G. W. B.

GEMS.

WHAT is called selfishness frequently consists in not doing what the selfishness of another person wishes you to do.

WISDOM and truth, the offspring of the sky, are immortal; but cunning and deception, the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment, must pass away.

ALWAYS have a book within your reach which you may catch up at your odd minutes. Resolve to edge in a little reading every day, if it is but a single sentence. If you can give fifteen minutes every day, it will be felt at the end of the year. Regulate your thoughts when not at study. A man is thinking even while at work. Let him think well.

OUR habitual life is like a wall hung with pictures, which has been shone on by the suns of many years; take one of the pictures away, and it leaves a definite, blank space, to which our eyes can never turn without a sensation of discomfort. Nay, the involuntary loss of any familiar object almost always brings a chill as from an evil omen; it seems to be the first finger-shadow of advancing death.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO PUDDING.—Peel, boil and mash 2 pounds of potatoes; when ready, take 3 eggs, and well beat them; now gradually add three-quarters of a pint of milk, two or more ounces of moist sugar, and a pinch of powdered allspice; finally blend the whole well together, and bake for three-quarters of an hour. Serve with or without sweet butter sauce.

CAMPOR MEDICATION.—Camphor is a poison, and yet it is largely used in many families for alleviating pain and curing sores. It is a nervous irritant.

If taken in small doses it acts like alcohol and opium. If in large quantities it excites the nervous system even to the extent of camphor spasms and death. Camphor also acts as an irritant on the mucous membrane of the stomach, leading to constipation and ulceration; on these accounts it should not be used without the advice of a physician. Families easily get into the habit of running to the camphor bottle for every trifling ailment, until after a while insidious maladies break out whose origin is little suspected.

A SIMPLE DISINFECTANT.—Roasted coffee is one of the most powerful means, not only of rendering animal and vegetable effluvia innocuous, but of actually destroying them. In proof of this, the statement has been made that a room in which meat, in an advanced degree of decomposition, had been kept for some time, was instantly deprived of all smell on an open coffee-roaster being carried through it containing 1 lb. of newly roasted coffee; and in another room the effluvia occasioned by the clearing out of a cesspool, so that sulphuretted hydrogen and ammonia could be clearly detected, was entirely removed within half a minute on the employment of 3 oz. of fresh coffee. The best mode is to dry the raw bean, pound it in a mortar, and then roast the powder on a moderately heated iron plate until it assumes a dark brown hue; it is in this state ready for use.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A MAGNIFICENT sapphire, valued at ten thousand rupees (1,000L.), has been found in Ceylon, which, it is stated, will be presented to the Duchess of Edinburgh.

THE City Temple, the Nonconformist church which has been erected on the south side of the Holborn viaduct, at a total cost of 60,000L., has just been opened.

As the annual series of London International Exhibitions will be discontinued after this year, it is being discussed to what use the galleries can be put as museums or fine-art galleries.

THE sum of 10,000L. has been granted as compensation by the Government to Mr. Mager, the British vice-consul, who was so outrageously treated by Gonzales at San José.

THE famous vase of Mantua and the seal of Mary Stuart, restored by virtue of a treaty between the City of Geneva and the heirs of the Duke of Brunswick, are now deposited in the ducal palace of Brunswick.

THE municipal authorities of Odessa invite architects of all nations to send in plans for a theatre to hold from 1,800 to 2,000 persons, and to cost not more than 800,000 roubles. The plan chosen will gain a prize of 6,000 rouble, and the second best 2,000 roubles. A further prize of 6,000 roubles will be paid for the designs for details, etc.

THREE hundred English Volunteers went to Havre, to take part in the first International Rifle Contest. The special train left Waterloo Station at 6:20 a.m., and the boat left Southampton at 9:30, on May 23rd, reaching Havre in the evening. Captain Mercier had the management of the excursion, which was both agreeable and successful.

In consequence of the recent and lamented death of the Dowager Duchess of Richmond, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond and family will not be present at the races on the Southern Downs, which take place the last week in July. Goodwood House has been placed at the disposal of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who, with a distinguished party, will honour "glorious Goodwood" with his presence.

ROBERT WALLACE, a centenarian soldier, died recently. He belonged to the Scots Greys, fought through the Peninsula, was present at Waterloo, had a horse shot from under him, and helped to carry off the field the Marquis of Anglesea, then Earl of Uxbridge. He was appointed drill sergeant to the Chislehurst troop of West Kent Yeomany Cavalry (Queen's Own). Being incapacitated from old age, he resigned after sixteen years' service. He was buried in the old parish church at Chislehurst, and a few members of troop followed his remains and acted as pall-bearers.

A NOBLEMAN, celebrated for his vast mineral properties, has laid 1,000 to 1 sixteen times that the Prince Imperial of France does not succeed to the throne of his father, so that if the Bonapartists should be in the ascendant within a reasonable time the noble lord stands to lose 16,000L.; and as he is only fifty-seven, and in the enjoyment of excellent health, it is quite possible he may yet live to see the Prince Imperial Emperor of the French, and have the satisfaction of paying up his trifling wager. It has been remarked, and perhaps this was the cause of the bet, that no grown-up son of a King or Emperor has sat on the French throne for 800 years.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

VIOLET (Burton-on-Trent).—The letter came safely to hand.

BERTHA.—Your request was duly complied with some time since.

J. G. B. (Dorking).—We do not clearly understand to what your letter alludes.

B. M. and T. L.—The handwriting is plain and ordinary, very deficient in style, but very legible.

R. J. N.—Mr. G. Street, of Cornhill, is, we believe, the London agent for most of the East Indian newspapers.

A. CONSTANT READER.—Brighton, we believe, is more densely populated than Scarborough, and is also favoured by the greater number of visitors.

THEIR.—Your verses are not good. The metrical arrangement is defective, the grammar is here and there bad, and the idea confused and occasionally erroneous.

CLARENCE.—You probably require what is termed a cooling mixture, of the precise nature of which a chemist who has the opportunity of seeing you will be the better judge.

BRUNSWICK.—We are obliged for your criticisms, which will not be forgotten. It is, however, necessary sometimes to consider the diversity of taste which must exist among two or three hundred thousand readers.

M. G.—Though your handwriting is neat and particularly legible it will not, we think, command admiration. You find it, however, useful, no doubt, that is a high quality. Artistically speaking it is a final hand.

P. D. (Manchester).—The young lady in all probability will prefer to wait until your present course of studies is completed, when, perhaps the position you are likely to take in the world will be more accurately defined.

A PUPIL TEACHER.—1. The new congregational tune book can be purchased of the publishers, Paternoster Row. 2. Wait until some fairy foot crosses your path and beckons you, then consider, if you can, whether you will follow.

J. G.—Under the circumstances by all means leave off smoking. A good toluic may be thus compounded: Disulphate of quinine, half a drachm; dilute sulphuric acid, ten drops; tincture of steel, ten drops; pure water, eight ounces. Take a wineglassful twice a day.

R. S.—We have never doubted the vivacity of your imagination nor the warmth of your feeling. We have merely regretted that such good qualities were not controlled by necessary care and judgment. Opinions will differ, of course, upon which point we may say that we are glad to find that in other quarters your efforts meet with a better reception than with us. This of itself is however no reason why we should refrain from speaking of your "Elegy," now under consideration, as the embodiment of an amiable thought disfigured by crudeness, inconsequence and carelessness.

FANNY F.—The omissions in your prettily written note, which reflection will readily bring to your mind, are such as to enable us to pronounce that in that sort of way it is impossible for you to arrive at the desired conclusion. Each individual should take care to furnish his or her clue to a labyrinth which often has many intricate paths. Such a course at all events renders future proceedings possible, though necessity of their probability, still more their certainty, must always depend upon such changeable points as taste, constancy of purpose, opportunity and ability, to say nothing of prudence and good health.

AS LEQUERRER.—The only natural means of improving the complexion, supposing it to be capable of improvement, is to use all such means as are found from good advice or from experience to be conducive to good health. These are early hours, exercise in the open air, nourishing food, a cheerful spirit and moderation in all things. As far as we know there exists no school for actors in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Many eminent members of the profession, however, take pupils. Having chosen the particular line of business for which you consider yourself qualified you should select your profession accordingly.

JAMES C.—You should summon patience to your aid, for you must bide your time. While waiting derive if you can, comfort from the new doctrine of affinity, recently set forth by some German savans. They assert that in the vital force of each individual there exists a special attraction for two other natures, and that this force acts in a manner as powerful spiritually as that which the magnet has for the loadstone physically. For example there is, they would tell you, some mysterious influence in yourself which will in due time attract to you, even if it be from the other side of the world, your exact and especial correlative both in friendship and in love. Now, if fortune is propitious you may attract both friendship and love united in one person that is in the person of your future wife, who is, according to this law

of affinity, now approaching you. Of course the superior force of calamity may alter the state of things, but contemplated matrimony is not the only circumstance in the world with which accident and change and death interfere. Still it is wise to look on the sunny side of affairs and to hope. Endeavour is the usual companion of genuine expectants, concerning which we may as well give you a hint that on the first glance at your letter it is manifest you have left a stone or two unturned.

MAGGIE S.—There is a luxuriant beauty about the excellent photograph you have sent for inspection which is very attractive, and we mistake if it is not the portrait of a young lady who is not merely greatly admired but also highly esteemed. If the lips had language they would tell, with some restraint perhaps, of the affection of the heart, which, deep as it seems to be, would be controlled not unduly by the seriousness emitted from the eyes and by the intelligence with which a forehead of great nobility is radiant. There is refinement in this face, and constancy and perhaps strength to warn off lackadaisical lovers, for who wins this young lady should be a good man and a man of great ability for the sake of her happiness. It is not easy to quit the contemplation of so much freshness of youth and beauty. However, the remaining questions in your note must be answered. As to the handwriting, we very much prefer that in which blue ink is used, it is by far the more stylish. If you must quit dear Old England, we should say, having regard to your certificates, that Canada would be likely to suit you, though if you could meet with some English family resident in the South of France or on the shores of the Mediterranean, to whom your accomplishments could be made available, the warmer climate and more congenial society would perhaps command your preference. Whether you stay here or carry out your desire to go abroad may good fortune be yours!

"SELF-MADE!"

His star of fate, to common eyes,
Seemed very small and dim;
And few the angel visitants
That sang his natal hymn!
But in that little feeble frame
Was lit a fire divine;
Destined to burn its bright way out,
To all the world a sign!

"Self-made!" No land to build upon,
Except the rock of trust!
No helpers, save one's own brave hands,
And will, that cry "we must!"
Proud entry in the line
And truth in every glance
Of eyes that straightway seek your own,
As warriors throw the lance!

Nature (dear mother) waxes kind
To children all her own,
And often gives the wealth of blood
And wondrous nerve and nerve!
No pampering dries their shows up,
No foolish, needless care
Relaxes muscles that are made
Life's burdens well to bear!

"Self-made!" The world has need of such
To plough her mighty seas!
To drive her commerce and her trade
And catch each prospering breeze!
As years gone by such noble souls
Have worked, nor worked in vain,
That "knowledge" might run to and fro
The earth, "an endless chain!"

M. A. K.

W. B.—Your earnestness seems to be in excess of your years, though perhaps it is admirable in its way. That your youth is likely to develop into a peculiarly practical manhood there is but little doubt. We smiled a good deal when we first read your letter, and the idea of a lad under fourteen being in love then seemed to us absurd. But when we reflect that children in the nursery of the much younger ages of six and nine now-a-days take (it was not so when we were young) of marrying certain specified acquaintances when the proper time arrives, our countenance felt somewhat more composed and we gradually came to the conclusion that it was our duty to try to help even "W. B." the "programme-boy at music-hall who is in love with a actress." Know then, rash youth, that as far as the passion of love is concerned girls consider boys, as women consider men, chiefly in two aspects. That is, according to their physical appearance or comeliness, under which head the girl's notion of beauty or handsomeness comes into play, and according to the boy's devotion to the object of his affections, under which division of the subject the question of the boy's abilities is naturally discussed. A woman's ideal is the man in whom great ability and handsome looks are united. She sometimes is compelled to dispense with the latter, but she will never, if she knows it, dispense with her idea of ability in the man or the youth who aspires to be her lover. Good looks being the gift of nature, a man however he may in this respect be situated has nothing to do; and therefore a would-be lover, if he is sensible enough to consider his chances, has to act upon the proverb "handsome is as handsome does." Now it is in your power to do anything, however trifling, for your fairy queen? If so do it. Get a chair for her when she is tired, fetch some modest refreshment for her that is within your means, wait for her at the door on a rainy night and contrive if you can some alleviation for any discomfort to which she may be exposed. But, mind, always within your means; for if she is worth having she will despise you for vainly attempting anything that is certainly beyond your reach. You can now begin to make love in the manner described, but before you win her you must legitimately earn enough money to keep the home, and you will never do this unless you are industrious and true, honest and considerate. Remember the chances are against you if a rival turns up who equals you in ability and surpasses you in appearance. But ability, integrity and perseverance are more than a match for mere comeliness of form. So work away with a cheerful heart. A girl's bright eyes were made to lead you upwards to competency, goodness and

happiness; whenever you find that they would lure you the other way—Beware!

MIKE F., twenty-one, 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, hazel eyes, and considered handsome, wishes to correspond with a tall young lady, fair, and wavy hair; a schoolmistress preferred.

OLANA, nineteen, fair, of a loving disposition and domesticated, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-five, tall, dark, and fond of home; a mechanic preferred.

A PRIVATE IN THE MARINES, twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., wishes to correspond with a nice young woman residing in or near Manchester, who would make a humble home happy.

J. S., twenty-one, 5ft. 7in., dark hair, blue eyes, considered good looking, and a gunner in the R. M. A., wishes to correspond with a nice young woman residing in or near Manchester.

J. K., twenty, a clerk, tall, fair, good looking, and future prospects good, would like to correspond with a well-educated young lady about seventeen or eighteen, who is entitled to money on her wedding-day.

SPOTROW, twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., seaman in the navy, dark curly hair, and considered good looking, desires to correspond with a young lady about twenty-one, who is domesticated and fond of home and children.

FORB YAN JON, twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., a seaman in the navy, hazel eyes, and good looking, wishes to correspond with a young lady about the same age, who is good looking, and fond of home and children.

LURLINE would like to correspond with a gentleman with a view to an engagement. She is thirty-two, good looking, has fair hair and dark-blue eyes. Respondent should be dark and of good education.

G. A. H., twenty, 5ft. 10in., fair complexion, considered handsome, of a loving disposition, and a mechanic, wishes to correspond with a young lady of medium height, affectionate, domesticated, with a view to an engagement.

J. C., medium height, light-brown hair, and in a respectable position, would be glad to hear from a young lady not more than twenty, of affectionate disposition, with a view to an early marriage.

MOON RAKER, twenty-one, 5ft. 6in., a seaman in the navy, dark hair, blue eyes, and good looking, wishes to correspond with a young woman about nineteen, tall, fair, fond of home and children and thoroughly domesticated.

JOLLY CHARLIE, twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., a clerk, dark-brown hair, fair complexion, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a nice-looking young lady about his own age, who must be loving and domesticated; one having a little means preferred.

UNCARED FOR, seventeen, 5ft. 2in., fair, hazel eyes, brown hair, good tempered, fond of home, and has prospects view, would like to correspond with a nice young gentleman, rather tall, steady, and fond of home and children; a tradesman preferred, who is able to keep a wife comfortably.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LOUISE wishes to hear farther from "John."

NELLIE by—"A. Y. J." twenty-four, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, hair, eyes and whiskers.

NINA by—"S. R." tall, fair, good tempered, loving and moderately good looking.

GOOD-TEMPERED ELIZA by—"E. A." thirty, fond of home and children, and thinks he will suit.

FAYROL CAANT by—"Dermot," twenty, fair, medium height, and suitable.

EMMA N. by—"Benj. M." twenty-two, dark, thinks he will just suit.

LIZZIE by—"Nil Desperandum," who believes himself to be everything that "Lizzie" can desire.

ELIZA W. by—"T. L." twenty-one, dark complexion, seaman on board H.M.S. "Britannia," who thinks he is all she requires.

ANNE F. by—"T. M." twenty-two, commercial man established for himself, a German, speaks five languages, of good family, dark complexion and rather tall.

STARLIGHT is responded to by—"Red Necktie," dark frizzy hair, considered pretty, nice figure, medium height, domesticated, and fond of home and music; has money.

BAFFLE JOE by—"Spotted Necktie," rather tall, nice figure, fair, hazel eyes, golden-brown hair, and very domesticated; by—"A. M." eighteen, cheerful, loving, fond of home, and will make a good wife to a loving husband; and by—"Saucy Puss," who is eighteen, medium height, cheerful, fond of home, domesticated, and respectably connected.

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